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COTTON WEB

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# COTTON WEB



BARBARA HUNT



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“I took one draught of life,  
I’ll tell you what I paid,  
Precisely an existence——  
The market price, they said.”

*Emily Dickinson.*

Although the historical events used as the background of this novel are accurate and true, the characters, the plot, and the cotton mills principally concerned in the story are all fictitious. I am deeply indebted to my Fall River friends for their long memories, their books which they lent me so freely, and their patience in answering my many questions.

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## COTTON WEB



## PART ONE

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### Kitty McCarran

At six o'clock on the morning of Christmas Eve, 1901, the *Priscilla*, making her home port, broke the mist that shrouded the Taunton River. She was white, broad beamed. Her passenger decks rose in glittering tiers above the water line, while below it her capacious holds were stuffed with bales of cotton: cotton was the reason for her being. She carried her passengers with all the beds, bars, salons, red carpets, gilded chandeliers, and walnut panelling necessary for their comfort merely to be accommodating: noblesse oblige. She was the queen of the Fall River Line, which spawned nothing but queens. She could afford grand gestures so long as her belly was full of cotton on the home journey and of cloth on the New York run. She rolled in the choppy water, complacently, imitating the self-satisfied waddle of a fat white goose.

To Kitty McCarran she was the grandest thing afloat, for Kitty's only previous experience with sailing had been the crossing from Ireland five years before. There was no comparison between the steerage of that dingy malodorous tub and the ostentatious decks of the *Priscilla*. Indeed, the two ships, in their small way, embodied all the contrast between Ireland and America. They were symbols of the gulf that lay between Kitty's past and her future. Perhaps at that moment, as she hung suspenseful over the gulf, she was closer to the Irish side than to the American. But that state of affairs would not last much longer.

Although she had certain misgivings about coming to Fall River—it might be a step back for a girl who had lived five years in New York—her sailing on the *Priscilla* went a long way to dispel her doubts. It reminded her that America was the place for people like herself to get on. She had paid her bit of money, walked up the gangplank, and the sheltering luxury of the *Priscilla* had enfolded her. And no questions asked. True, she hadn't been able to afford a berth, which was a pity. But in Ireland the mere thought of a girl like Kitty McCarran sailing

in a ship like the *Priscilla* would have been presumptuous. Here you paid your money and took your place. Therefore the things people said about America were true: everyone had the same chance, and there was nothing on earth to stop Kitty from marrying a millionaire—in America.

Not that America had been kind to her so far. That, however, was her father's fault, not hers. He'd been no help to her ever in her life, and especially not during the time they'd lived in New York. You'd think with a daughter as beautiful as Kitty he'd have taken pride and tried to improve himself so as to give her advantages. But no, not Rafael McCarran, with his restless, belligerent spirit and his love of the whisky, and the way he had, when he got his dander up, of standing on his two feet and shaking his fist at the Lord, as if the mess the world was in were a private matter between the two of them, and Rafael McCarran's task on earth was to bully God into doing something about it.

Now he was dead, rest his soul. A new life lay ahead of her with her Aunt Bridie McCarran and her cousin Rosie, people she scarcely knew, although they were her only relatives on earth. She faced the new life with a mingling of anticipation and fear, and with excitement so great that it made her knees tremble. But none of the sailors working briskly on the deck knew this, for her legs were covered with long, knitted drawers, knitted woollen stockings, calf-length linen drawers trimmed with crocheted lace, four petticoats, and a shabby, black woollen skirt. Not even the bold wind, sweeping around Sakonnet from the open sea and whistling through the Narrows, could find her knees.

The wind yanked at her woollen shawl, and Kitty clutched it tighter around her head. Thus austere framed, with her dark hair hidden, her face emerged like an immaculate cameo carved against the mist. It was a face so perfect in its chaste modelling that people had difficulty recalling it, for it blended in their memories with the formal, bland faces of painted madonnas and saints. When it was in repose one could not believe that any reflection of human emotion would ever mar it. There was no hint that thought ever creased the serene brow; that tears ever clouded the large, black-fringed eyes as blue and impersonal as sapphires; that laughter ever distorted the carved coral mouth. Nor that wrinkles might ever deface the cold cheek.

Kitty McCarran was twenty: over-ripe for love. The thing was, she knew her worth. A face like hers might not be as good as money in the bank, but it was the next best thing. It was not a face to waste on a

digging to get it. And the loneliness—what about that? After his death, not a soul to talk to, except sometimes another servant or the priest in the confessional: because a lone woman couldn't go into bars and make friends over the whisky nor talk to people in the park. Oh, that was a terrible thing, being alone in New York, with four million people all around you and not a soul among them knowing you were alive, nor caring.

It couldn't be a backward step to come here. It had to be forward because it was final—she had felt its finality when she had bought her ticket and boarded the *Priscilla*. It was a new life ahead of her, and she wasn't going to have the course of it spoiled by his carping voice, whispering at her from the grave. Oh, rest his soul, rest his soul! With the first bit of money she got together, she'd have a Mass said for the peace of it.

Suddenly bells assailed the air. She started, clutching the ship's rail, for the clangour rending the morning silence was too unexpected, too rude an intrusion upon her thoughts. She shivered in prescient fear, summoned from the nebulous substratum of her many fears by the wild, unsynchronized insistence of the bells. They shattered sleep in all the sleeping town. They tore the morning into ringing tatters. They demanded something of her, the new arrival, the hesitant stranger. Then she saw the people swarming in abject haste into the granite buildings, and she understood that the bells were the call to work. He who did not work woke anyhow, perforce. Possibly even the dead woke briefly, uneasily, nagged by half-remembered guilt because this time—this once—they could not answer the wild demanding bells.

The ship slipped gently into her dock, snugly at home. Beyond the wharf Kitty saw the largest buildings of all, one beside another like a group of vast prisons. Men, women, and children hurried into the buildings, each clutching a dinner pail. They were meagre-looking people, thin, cold in the grey morning, scantily clad; and even under the goading of the bells, they hurried wearily.

Kitty turned to a sailor who stood waiting to toss a hawser to the men on the dock, "What mill is that, sir?"

"The Fall River Iron Works, and the Print Works, miss. Together they make the biggest cotton mill in the world. And that's the tallest smoke-stack in the world they have, too."

"Fancy that!" she whispered. And suddenly she felt a wild excitement surge up within her, as if all the promise and glory of her new life had rolled back from the future into this moment and burst like

a shooting star in her heart. She wanted to shout with the joy of it, but she only said decorously to the sailor, "It's a grand sight now, isn't it?"

He smiled. It would have been a hard man indeed who could have refrained from smiling at Kitty McCarran. But he said, "Everybody to his taste, miss. I'd rather go to sea myself." Then he was busy with the ship and could talk to her no more.

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There was no one on the dock resembling Aunt Bridie or Rosie. Of course Kitty might have forgotten how they looked, for she had seen them only once, and Rosie had been a child of thirteen then. It had been right after she and her father had got to America. They'd landed in Boston. Rafael McCarran had looked Boston over for a week and decided that there was nothing in it for him, that it was too sorely pressed down beneath the thumb of the Interests to respond to his agitation. "'Tis the reek of the priests I can't stand," he'd said. "And only the luck of the devil brought me here, to a blasted place that's as holy as the backside of an Archbishop's drawers. So it's on we go, darling, down to my brother Tim in Fall River, and sure he'll be owning a mill by now, and his daughters 'll have married fine upstanding millionaires, and we'll settle down there, Kitty, and live off the fat, and I'll take me a bath in one of them tubs, damned if I don't. Maybe in champagne like the actresses, now." And dreamily, in lascivious meditation: "Wonder what it'd feel like, all them bubbles tickling your backside."

But when they had got to Fall River, they'd found that Tim McCarran had died of the cotton fever, and his two daughters had burned to death years before in the great fire at the Olney Mill, and Aunt Bridie had gone soft in the head from the grief of it. Rosie, Tim's granddaughter, had been working in the mill even then. Kitty and Rosie hadn't been able to find much to talk about. But very likely Rosie had improved now, with the years and more experience. And she was married now, to a weaver.

They'd spent but one night with Aunt Bridie, for Rafael McCarran could see at a glance there was nothing in the town for him. He'd kissed Bridie on the cheek and given her five dollars which they could ill spare, and he'd told her if she ever needed anything just to drop him a line in New York, at the Astor Hotel where he'd be staying. Aunt

Bridie had wept and begged him not to leave and said he'd a heart of pure gold, like the saint he was named for.

All the way down to New York he'd fumed, lashing the Lord for criminal negligence with every wag of his tongue. "'Twas no use offending the old body, Kitty, and her with such griefs as 'd make the Devil shut up shop if he wasn't blind, deaf, *and* dumb. But it's a sore trial that we should go to our graves, she to hers and me to mine, and her thinking all the while it's a saint's name I'm cursed with. An angel of the Lord I was named for, my girl, and nothing less, and don't you forget it."

And he'd said, "'Tis a hell of a town, reeking rotten from top to bottom with the scum of the Interests. Driving old women crazy and getting fat off the work of the children, and killing my brother Tim, rest his soul, for a finer never walked the earth." He'd taken a nip from the bottle he carried in his pocket. "Sure though, I'd of known it all, and right as it happened, and it wouldn't of been such a shock, if only I were a better hand with the letters. But it hits a man, coming at him all of a heap like thunder from the skies." And he'd taken another nip. "Ah, well now, there must be some green place in this blasted country where a man can feel decent in the air and stand up in the sun and look the Lord in the eye and speak his mind."

Yes, Kitty was sure she would remember Aunt Bridie, with her soft, sagging body, her gentle mouth, and her innocent blue eyes. As the people on the dock dispersed, Kitty felt a slowly mounting panic. The elation of arrival ebbed. The undisciplined, ridiculous fear known to every stranger who has ever waited at a dock, in a railroad station, watching the unheeding crowds pass by, took hold of her. The moment of waiting, alone, unknown, was a rag of time that she disowned, for it was torn neither from her past nor her future.

In such moments we are not ourselves: our identities flee from us in a little death. Our continuities are broken. The tiny Now, which always before had been the unperceived bridge over which the past flowed into the future, becomes a rock damning the stream. Such moments frighten us, even though we know we have only to hail a cab to end them. They catch us prisoner, deprive us of direction. They enlarge the limits of the instant Now to terrible dimensions, until in fright we turn with an embarrassed laugh or an angry word, and we walk, not run, to the nearest exit. Or mercifully, he who was to meet us comes. We move forward again, gobbling the future, denying the moment when the present held us in a timeless grip, when the past was



gone, and the future would not come. We reject the moment when we were a purposeless jot among the crowd that moved with purpose. We flee the moment when we waited, alone, and without reason, afraid.

A tall, bony woman with a horsy face trundled an empty pushcart on to the dock. She approached Kitty with a determined tread. "You must be the one. I'm Minerva Hawkes. Nobody else could come to meet you. Where's your luggage?"

Kitty backed away slightly. The woman was a freak, with a mad, wild look in her eyes. And there'd been a lot of talk about white slavery. A girl alone——

"Well, come on. I haven't got all day. You are Kitty McCarran, aren't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"All right then. I'm Andrew Hawkes's aunt. Rosie's husband, you know. We're all living in the same tenement now——saves on the rent. Where's your luggage?"

Kitty pointed to it, and Minerva Hawkes began loading the bundles and boxes on to the pushcart, balancing everything neatly with an expert hand. Then she started off along the dock, pushing the cart. Perforce Kitty followed, but at a slight distance, as if she and Miss Minerva did not belong together, for it would be awful and humiliating if anyone saw her walking through the streets in the company of this horrible woman.

Minerva Hawkes was nearly six feet tall, and so thin that one could almost hear her bones rattle when she walked. She'd never had what she called "a figger", and judging by the lofty poise with which she managed the pushcart, she did not care. "The good Lord built me for work, not for looks," she'd often say, her horse-like teeth flashing in a grin. "And besides, handsome is as handsome does." Whether from carelessness or from poverty, she had achieved the most deplorable of all effects in her attire: she looked comical. She wore a pair of man's work boots, which stuck out under an ancient flapping tweed skirt; a man's black sweater, which had been falling apart for years, buttoned up to her scrawny throat; a man's dilapidated overcoat, black, with napless velvet collar and cuffs; parts of two pairs of mittens, one red, one brown; and a shapeless black velvet bonnet, trimmed with jet and the drooping fragments of two red velvet roses. She secured this hat over her wispy brown hair by tying its ragged ribbons in a knot under her chin and then poking three gigantic hatpins through it at divers angles.

"Well," said Miss Hawkes, over her shoulder, "you have a nice trip up here?"

"Tis surely a grand boat." Kitty moved up a few steps, but she did not offer to help push the cart. Oh, why hadn't she had the sense to take a cab right off and save herself the embarrassment of this whole encounter?

"Umph," said Miss Hawkes, managing to convey, in that one abortive grunt an immense scorn of the Fall River Line and all it stood for.

They plodded up a long hill, Miss Hawkes's sinewy strength making no work at all of the cart. Kitty looked around her, but there was nothing of interest to see, nothing but the granite walls of mills, drays pulled by straining Percherons and loaded with obese cotton bales, and a few plain busy men in a hurry. In an uncomfortable effort to be polite, Kitty said, "It was nice of you to meet me, Miss Hawkes. And to borrow the cart for my things."

"Didn't borrow it. I use it in my business."

"What is your business?"

"Scavenge."

"Scavenge?"

"Junk. People put their trash out to be collected, and I go around ahead of the collectors. Then I sort the junk over and sell it. Beats working in a mill. It's got more dignity, working for yourself. Think as you please, do as you please, and the devil take the hindmost. There's few enough in this world can call their souls their own."

Kitty did not know what to answer. It was incredible that anyone could take pride in being a junk collector. She felt sorry for Rosie, connected by marriage with this freak.

They reached Main Street, which was full of Christmas, and this startled Kitty, for she had forgotten the day. She walked more slowly, looking in the store windows at the baskets of fruit, the little Christmas trees, the chocolate and papier mâché Santa Clauses, the poinsettias. Miss Hawkes said, "Hurry up, Miss McCarran. I've not got all morning to waste. This is trash day in the Highlands."

"Where's that, Miss Hawkes?"

"Where the rich people live. And they're always careless what they throw out just before a holiday."

Kitty felt a growing loneliness, heightened by the Christmas joy of the people in the street. She felt degraded to have no money on Christmas Eve and no expectation of gifts on the morrow. And it was humiliating that people turned and stared at her because she was in the

company of a scarecrow with a pushcart. Everyone belonged here but Kitty McCarran, everyone had purpose, security, a position in life. The shoppers carrying bulging packages were at home, happy, and so were the children staring with longing eyes at the holiday windows of the stores. She envied the women wearing velvet coats and fur neck pieces with tight bunches of violets pinned to their muffs and coachmen trailing behind with their bundles. The Salvation Army people rang their bells and held out their tambourines. The vendors, selling hot chestnuts, peanuts, flowers, holly wreaths, hot meat pies, toffee apples, and popcorn, blew their whistles and cried their wares. The gay noises merely underlined her loneliness. She stopped and bought a holly wreath for fifteen cents, and then she felt better. It always made Kitty feel better to buy a little something when she was low.

But Miss Hawkes said, "Be more sensible to spend the money on food."

The traffic was now a tangled, creaking maze of drays, buggies and carriages, delivery wagons, and pedlars with pushcarts. The drivers shouted at each other, mingling curses and Christmas greetings indiscriminately. Then suddenly, to make this strange-town Christmas seem still more bleak, it began to snow. A sharp longing pierced through Kitty: she wished that Rafael McCarran were not dead. If only she could hear his soft voice murmuring some wild heresy into her ear, she would not feel that she was really committed to this new life forever; nor that she had really taken an irrevocable step. There had always been a way out of everything for Rafael McCarran with his genius for slipping through the fingers of fate unnoticed. Kitty lifted her chin defiantly. Well, they'd notice her before she was through with them—and not just because she bought a measly holly wreath either.

Miss Hawkes stopped to wait for a break in the snarl of drays. "That's the City Hall over there. Bridie McCarran thinks it's grand."

"It's very nice," said Kitty politely, although she thought it a poor excuse for a public building. The mills with their great smoke-stacks, the skyscrapers of New York, the drays crawling under their loads of cotton, all these impressed her. But this government building was such a pathetic affair that she felt almost embarrassed to stare at it. It was merely a little granite thing that could have been swallowed whole by any of the mills.

She had yet to learn that Americans hated government, distrusted it, and must always symbolize its subordination to themselves by constructing buildings to house it which they proclaimed to be grand and

beautiful, but which were always a little smaller than the university, the railroad station, the library, the mill, the department store, the skyscraper, or the bank.

"You don't think much of it, do you?"

"It's not so grand as the mills."

"Well, it's the mills run the place, not City Hall." They crossed, inching their way through the traffic snarl. "That's the Pocasset Mill there, behind this block of stores."

Kitty looked at the bleak, austere backdrop of stone against which beat and throbbed the life of the city. The mills looked harder, more merciless, and bigger when you saw them close up than they had looked from the river. Again the sense of lonely desolation swept through her, that sense of not mattering to anyone at all.

"That's the Academy of Music Theatre across the street. Supposed to be the finest thing between Boston and New York. Never been inside it myself, though."

"Fancy that! A music hall in Fall River!"

"More like an opera house, I'd say." From under the decayed roses on her bonnet, Miss Hawkes cast a penetrating glance at Kitty. "Look here now. You're not one of those New Yorkers thinks everybody but yourself's a hick, are you?"

Kitty flushed. "Oh no!" But of course it was the truth that you couldn't live five years in New York without learning a few things. No use offending Miss Hawkes, though, or any of the others, when she'd have to get along with them, for a while at least.

They turned into Bedford Street, plodding on through the growing density of snow. Miss Hawkes wagged her bonnet toward a forbidding granite structure with dirty windows. "That's the Old Troy. Oldest mill in town. Started in 1811, pretty near a hundred years ago now. Of course not that same building. That must've been put up during the war, or right after."

"What war?" asked Kitty, gawping at the Old Troy.

"Civil War. Look down there and you can see the Quequechan—runs right under the Troy and comes out by the bridge there."

"'Tis a queer name."

"It's Indian. Means river with falls, falling river, something like that."

"And where would the waterfall be?"

"All covered over now. We're walking right over some of it. Can't have a waterfall right through the middle of town, naturally." Miss

Hawkes jabbed Kitty smartly with her elbow. "Look—there's Lucian Olney."

A young man strode past them, swinging a cane. He wore a grey beaver hat, yellow gloves, and a diamond tie-pin. He had light-brown hair and grey eyes. and Kitty thought him exceedingly handsome.

"Past eight o'clock, and he's just getting to work!" snorted Miss Hawkes.

"But if he owns a mill perhaps he needn't——"

"Not him. His father. Barnabas Olney is one thing, and there's much to be said in his favour. But Lucian——" Miss Hawkes shrugged. "Though I should warn you that Mrs. McCarran thinks he's the salt of the earth."

"He's very dashing," said Kitty.

"Oh, very. But an old maid like me can afford to be a judge of men. She has nothing to lose by it. There's something wrong with all of them, of course. Some, however, are endurable. Others are not. Lucian Olney is not."

"Did he offend you now, some way, Miss Hawkes?"

Minerva laughed. "I've never got close enough to be offended—except in a large way. He gives himself airs. Isn't that enough?"

Kitty slipped, nearly fell. Miss Hawkes said, "Be careful, child. Have to watch your step here. Street gets full of pieces of cotton that drop from the bales. Weather like this underfoot, they're just like banana peels. Look, there, across the street. That's the Olney Mill."

Kitty looked at the group of oblong buildings, massive, built huge and plain of Fall River granite. She saw Mr. Lucian Olney turn and enter the mill yard. "Is that where Rosie works?"

"Yes. And my nephews, Andrew and Philip. It's five mills, to be exact. The one across the street's where they had the fire that Rosie's mother died in."

"I expect that's where I'll be working too, then." As they passed the entrance to the yard, Kitty looked in hoping for another glimpse of Mr. Lucian Olney, but he had disappeared.

"Not if you've any sense, you won't," said Miss Hawkes.

They turned into a narrow lane between two big frame houses that were painted dark brown, then entered a small backyard where draggled washing was hanging in the snow. "Here we are." Miss Hawkes briskly started to unload the cart. "Think you can carry something up?"

Kitty took the heaviest valise. As she entered the tenement kitchen, and Aunt Bridie embraced her with tears and kisses, she felt a wave of

relief, a sense that this strange house, even the strange town, was home. Perhaps it was Aunt Bridie's crooning Irish voice. Perhaps it was the final reconciliation to the hard fact that whether Kitty liked it or not, this place was going to be home for a while simply because it had to be.

"Now sit down here, dearie," said Bridie McCarran, bustling about the kitchen. "The tea'll be steeped in a minute. And how was the voyage? I'd of come meself to meet you, only I haven't a decent pair of shoes to me name. Cup of tea, Miss Hawkes?"

Eyeing both the Irishwomen with sharp, sardonic amusement, Miss Hawkes swallowed a cup of scalding tea, then rinsed out the cup and said, "Well, I'm off. Best get some rest while you can, Miss McCarran."

She tramped out. Neither Kitty nor Bridie said anything until they ceased to hear the clomping of her boots on the stairs. Then Bridie set fried mush before Kitty, poured the tea, and sank down into a rickety chair with a sigh. "Now, dearie. Tell me all about the terrible passing of Rafe McCarran, God rest his soul."

### 3

When Andrew Hawkes came home from work that night, he found Mrs. McCarran sitting by the window staring out into the darkness with the light from the kerosene lamp shining on the mending in her lap, and on her rough hands lying idle atop the mending, and on the old iron thimble. She was listening to every footfall on the tenement stairs, waiting, attentive in the deepening darkness. The living came and went without disturbing her. She was waiting for the dead.

When he had first known Mrs. McCarran, this habit of hers had scared Andrew, given him what he called "the willies". Now, after living in the same house with her for three months, he had grown used to it. She was a good soul when you got to know her, gentle, tolerant of a man's secret dreams. Only in this matter of the long-ago dead was she crazy, although Aunt Minerva considered her impractical in everything. Early in life she had made up her mind that the Irish were a race of dreamers.

Andrew had no compunctions about interrupting Mrs. McCarran's waiting, for the whole family agreed it was unhealthy. "Did she get here all right?" he asked.

The lamplight fell upon her upturned face, etching its patient wrinkles. She saw that it was only Andrew who had spoken, and she sighed. "She did that, just like a grand lady on the boat. Mind you go

quiet about the house now, for she's resting a bit in Miss Hawkes's room. Oh, she's a pretty thing, Andrew! A pretty thing!"

Andrew lowered his voice to a whisper. "Would you happen to have a bit of tissue paper, Mrs. McCarran?"

"Tush, boy! What would I be doing with tissue paper? Ask your Aunt Minerva—she's the one for fancy things."

"Look, I have presents for Rosie." He laid them in her lap. "Think she'll like them?"

"My, such things! Real fur, Andrew!" She stroked the neck piece, loving its softness, not seeing how worn it was, now second-hand. "She'll look like a queen in it—such a pretty girl Rosie is."

"It's a little rubbed about the neck, but it'll never show when she has it on."

"Never in this world. Besides, the warmth it gives counts too." She picked up the other present, her bright eyes shining. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, it's Beleek! A real Beleek pitcher!"

"Of course it has that little crack, and the chip out of the handle. But it doesn't leak. I tried it."

"The very best Irish china! Sure there's *nothing* better than Beleek! But you'd better hide them quick before everyone starts traipsing in." She turned again toward the window, shielding her eyes from the light the better to peer into the darkness. Andrew felt her spirit retreat from him, as if the darkness clutched it.

He raised his voice, a little desperately. These things were hard to cope with. "Don't you have *any* tissue paper?"

She did not hear him.

Then the City Hall clock struck seven. As if it were the signal she awaited, Mrs. McCarran bundled up her mending and rose. "My, but the nights draw in early this time of year!" She looked sharply at Andrew. "How is it you're home already?"

Andrew mumbled, "Something went wrong with the weaverroom belt." It was useless to remind Mrs. McCarran again that the mill always shut down at six now. She'd heard all about the fight for the sixty hour week, and in a way she knew the truth. It was necessary to the crazy part of Mrs. McCarran's mind to believe that nothing had changed at the mill, nor ever would change. Everything about the mill must be kept, in her mind, as it had been before the great fire. Everyone still had to work seventy-two hours a week. She would merely smile and nod at explanations and say, "My, ain't that nice for you, Andrew! So much leisure!" And she'd go right on believing her crazy beliefs,

Time had stopped for her on the day of the great fire. Little things like bits of fur and Beleck pitchers did not disturb her, nor did the succession of the seasons, Christmas following Christmas. She went berserk only when she heard a fire engine clang down the street, or when the wind blew the vile smoke from the burning dump to her nostrils, for that was a smell not unlike the stench of a mill on fire.

Andrew went into the bedroom he shared with Rosie and hid his presents. It was a room about twelve feet square, with two windows looking out on to the second-floor porch that overhung the noise and dirt of Bedford Street. The furniture consisted of a brass bedstead, a wash-stand with a chipped marble top and a speckled mirror, and a chair with a broken leg which Andrew often tried to mend. The previous Sunday he had glued it together again and tied it with a piece of string, which was still there because he had not had time to remove it. The rug was a scrap cut from the edge of a large carpet: some of Aunt Minerva's salvage. The white scrim curtains were much mended, but clean and starched, for Mrs. McCarran took pride in "keeping the windows nice". All the interior walls of the tenement were painted mustard colour, with the woodwork dark brown. The ceilings were pressed tin with an embossed design of rosettes and diamonds, and the white paint was peeling from them in many places. There was a gas fixture on one wall of the bedroom, but this was now disconnected because Mr. Olney was putting electricity in all his mill tenements. Workmen from the mill were doing the wiring when they had free time. They had now reached Andrew's flat. Rosie and Mrs. McCarran were looking forward to the electricity, and Rosie had seen a stained glass shade for the parlour that she coveted. But Andrew didn't think they'd be able to use the electricity after they had it: too expensive.

He got hot water from the kitchen and washed himself all over—took a thorough bath—put on his good trousers and his clean shirt and combed his curly black hair. He scrutinized his face in the mirror, thinking that perhaps he should shave. For all his youth—Andrew was twenty-four—his face had a gaunt maturity. The bones were prominent, the eyes tired, the mouth drawn. His were the rugged features and the agile, undersized body of the English mill-worker. If he ever had to look for another job any mill superintendent would instantly recognize all Andrew's capabilities and defects: his skill, his reliability, his years of experience, his honesty, and the fact that he belonged to the Union. Whether he got the job would depend upon



how much the superintendent hated the Union. But Andrew didn't have to worry. Mr. Olney never fired a good, respectable workman.

He squinted at himself in the glass. Whenever he looked closely at anything, he squinted. Fine wrinkles were now forming about his eyes, the fruit of the years he'd spent peering at the threads on his looms. He'd started as a doffer boy at six, then he'd worked on the slasher for a while, then his father had begun to teach him weaving. During bad times, when the mills were down, he'd gone to the public schools; during good times he'd gone for a few hours each day to the special school Mr. Olney had for the mill children. Or had had in the old days: now children weren't supposed to go to work until they were twelve, which gave them plenty of time to get an education first. Mr. Olney was the only mill owner who'd ever run a school for the children: lucky for Andrew and Philip their family had happened to work for such a man. Now Andrew was an eight-loom weaver, and he could go no higher unless he learned loom-fixing. Of course, if he and Philip had any luck with the invention, that would change everything. But he did not dream too much about the invention. As Aunt Minerva so frequently said, "Small expectations bring small disappointments. But pride goeth before a fall."

He heard Rosie's step in the parlour, and her shrill, glad call: "Andrew! Mr. Olney's men are bringing the baskets!"

He ran from the bedroom, hearing the doors of one flat after another opening, the voices gay and friendly: "Mr. Olney says a Merry Christmas to you! A Merry Christmas!" And the answering voices, warm with gratitude: "The same to you, sir! And to Mr. Olney, may God bless him this day! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!"

Rosie flung their door wide to let Mr. Olney's coachman stagger into the room lugging the heavy food basket. Andrew darted to him. "Here, sir, let me help you!"

"Weighs a good bit," gasped the coachman. "I'm not so young as I was, either." Although Patrick O'Hearn believed in charity, since it was good for the soul and the poor we have always with us, he considered this annual vagary of Mr. Olney a bit too much. Why, there were over seven hundred hands at the Olney Mill! If you added the widows and orphans, it made over a thousand baskets, each and every year! And not really charity, properly speaking, since the hands weren't exactly destitute, but as well off as they deserved to be, considering they were a lower order of humanity.

Andrew took the basket, a full bushel, heaping over. Then a boy

came in with a special box of luxuries for Mrs. McCarran. Mr. Olney never forgot how her daughters had died.

"A bit of something special for you, Mrs. McCarran. Where would you have the boy put it?"

"In the kitchen, please, if it ain't too much trouble, Mr. O'Hearn." And having always been strict in the observation of the amenities, Mrs. McCarran added, "A bit blustery out tonight, Mr. O'Hearn?"

"It is that, Mrs. McCarran. Blowing up for a big snow, I'd say."

"Ah! And fine it is for the children to have a white Christmas. And how is Mrs. O'Hearn keeping herself these days?"

"A trifle weary with the season and all, Mrs. McCarran. She remarked only today she'll be glad when the party's over and she can get the load off her feet for a change."

"Oh—a party at your house is it, Mr. O'Hearn?"

"No, at the Pughs'. However, being it's to announce the engagement of Miss Adelaide Pugh to our Mr. Lucian, we are naturally involved. Mrs. Olney saw fit to give the loan of Mrs. O'Hearn to Mrs. Pugh, especially for the pies."

Mrs. McCarran nodded soberly, appreciative of these revelations from the great world. "Ah, indeed, Mr. O'Hearn, time flies by us all! I remember meself, and it seems only yesterday, when Mr. Lucian wasn't knee high to a grasshopper, and now——"

"It's a great thing for us all, Mrs. McCarran, to see the Pugh and the Olney interests united in one vast enterprise. The nuptials will be very fine indeed, and they're going to Europe for the honeymoon."

"Think of that! But I'm forgetting myself! You must have a cup of tea to warm you, Mr. O'Hearn."

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. McCarran, but no—I must be on my way. I've a sight of baskets to deliver yet."

"Then perhaps sometime soon you and Mrs. O'Hearn can drop by for a nice long chat. With the town getting so big, and the Portuguese coming in in droves, it behooves us old-timers to keep in touch, don't you think?"

"Indeed yes, and I'll convey your invitation to Mrs. O'Hearn. Good night, now. Come, boy! What are you dawdling over?"

The boy came running, and Mrs. McCarran reluctantly shut the door after Mr. O'Hearn. She hoped he really would come and see her, but she knew he wouldn't. She gave him this invitation every year, and every year he neglected to come. Not that she blamed him. Pat O'Hearn had gone up in the world since they'd both travelled to America on the same boat. There were some, like the Hawkes family,

that had prejudices against being servants, even in a big house, but Mrs. McCarran was not one of them. Either way, in the mill or in somebody's kitchen, you had to take a lot. Life wasn't too easy, on the whole. No, not too easy.

She walked slowly into the kitchen, dragging her broken shoes in a tired shuffle. Bridie was fifty-five, yet everyone called her old and thought of her as old. People were surprised to learn she was not seventy. When she remembered things that had happened before the fire, as she was remembering now the passage from Ireland and how handsome Patrick O'Hearn had been as a young man, she thought of these things as of events unimaginably remote. They were like things that had happened before her time, of which she had been told.

The noise had wakened Kitty. When she entered the kitchen her cheeks were flushed from sleep, and her eyes looked large and dreamy. In spite of her shabby clothes she was so much less draggled and tired than anyone else in the room that she seemed to them remote, queenly, angelic. She came to them suddenly, from a world they did not know, and they invested her, therefore, with a sophistication which she did not have. Andrew looked at her with quick appreciation of her beauty, and an uneasy sense, which he quickly pushed away as an unjust thought, that she had the looks and build of one who might make trouble for them. Rosie paused amid her happy scrabbling in the basket, and a slow flush spread over her pretty face.

"Hello, Kitty. Did you have a good trip up?"

"'Twas a bit rough, and I got no sleep all the night from not having the money for a berth. Is there something I can do to help?"

"No, thanks." Rosie was jealous of her right to the basket. "You just sit there by the stove and rest."

Kitty, a quiet, knowing little smile on her face, sat down in the rocker. Rosie tried to forget the watching eyes, but she could not. Joy lost a little of its savour. She felt that Kitty's silence *criticized* her. Her voice grew more shrill as she gloated over the basket, and her excitement became somewhat self-conscious, as if she were acting now for Kitty's benefit.

Rosie had a round face, a flawless pink-and-white complexion, and blue eyes that crinkled at the corners when she laughed. Her light-brown hair curled after a day's work in the steamy humidity of the mill, and now the ringlets were twisting loose from their pins. She was extremely nervous, flying from task to task with quick, transient enthusiasm. She did not know why she always had to move so fast, but it was because she was too tired to sit still. She had gone to work

in the mill at six, and she had always helped Mrs. McCarran with the housework. She could not have got through it all if she hadn't learned to move fast.

"Look, Gramma," she screamed. "There's even celery! Can you imagine that?"

"You mustn't shout, dearie. It ain't refined. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the place looks like a market!"

"Let's get some of it to cooking quick." Rosie held the turkey up by its feet. "Did you ever see the like in your life? I bet it weighs thirty pounds."

"Every ounce of that," said Mrs. McCarran.

"More like twenty-five, I'd say. Won't be more than twenty with the guts out." They all turned to see Minerva Hawkes standing at the back door, surveying them and their loot in a businesslike manner. She carried two bulging string bags in her mittened hands. "Andrew, the cart's full. Go bring the stuff up before the children find it and tear it to pieces. Where's Philip?"

"Dunno," said Rosie, as Andrew obediently went out.

Minerva divested herself of the overcoat, the sweater, and the mittens. "Well, Miss McCarran, you get yourself some rest? I hope there's some decent tea in there, Rosie."

"There always is, isn't there?" Rosie resumed her exploration of the basket more quietly. She didn't care much for Aunt Minerva and her wry remarks. She thought it humiliating to have to live in the same tenement with a scavenger.

Andrew came up with an armload of junk, which he dumped in the corner. Then Philip entered, whistling and carrying a small Christmas tree over his shoulder. "Hi, everybody! Look what I got for a quarter!"

"Humph," said Minerva. "Two hours' wages shot on frippery."

Philip leaned the tree against the wall, chucked her under her rugged chin, and said, "Come off it, old lady. Only happens once a year. My form of riotous living. Oh, excuse me." He bowed awkwardly at Kitty. "I didn't see you there."

Rosie introduced them, and they greeted each other formally. Then Philip went to help Andrew with the junk. They made trip after trip, and each time they re-entered the room they stared at Kitty, trying to seem not to stare. She flushed under their glances and lowered her eyes, seemingly modest.

Kitty thought Andrew rather handsome, but Philip was almost ugly. His face was lean, sharp, craggy. It was secretly alert, the muscles

tense around the mouth. He was of medium height, spare of build, and in his body too there was tension, as if by will he suppressed an inherent restlessness. There was a blasphemous discontent about him that Kitty did not like at all. It reminded her of her father, and she thought that Philip also might very well turn out to be quarry for the Pinkertons.

When the junk was all piled in the corner, Minerva, still wearing her bonnet, began forthwith to sort it. Andrew and Philip washed at the sink, and Rosie helped Mrs. McCarran with the supper. Kitty, sitting by the stove alone, now felt unnecessary and unwanted as she watched them pick up their lives where she had interrupted them.

Andrew said, "It beats me how you can push that cart with such a load in it."

Minerva yanked a length of old pipe from among a snarl of rags and paper. "Just put my mind to it and do it. Think there's a quarter's worth of iron in this, Andrew?" She held up a statue of Mercury balanced on one toe, caduceus aloft. "Can you figger anybody throwing that out? Not a thing wrong with it."

Embarrassed, Rosie and Kitty turned away from the naked statue, and Mrs. McCarran said, "Indecent, I call it."

"Expect that was the reason. Though for one, I could never see why naked men're so much more indecent than naked women. But it's an ill wind and so forth. What d'you think I can get for it, Andrew?"

Philip came and sat down beside Kitty. She looked at him obliquely, furtively, and a slight smile curved her mouth.

Andrew hefted the statue. "Anton Rubashevski has customers are always looking for stuff like this. He might go a dollar on it."

"Don't be a fool, Andrew! He's just another Jew out for every cent he can get!"

"He's all right, even if he is a Jew. Besides, aren't you out for every cent you can get?"

"Andrew!" said Rosie, shocked. "What a thing to say to your Aunt!"

"No, he's right, Rosie. It's just business to be out for every cent. But nobody in his right mind would give me a dollar for this whole lot of stuff. Let alone a Jew."

"No harm trying," said Andrew. "Just last Sunday he was telling me what he paid for things, and I thought of you, and——"

"What were you doing, talking to him last Sunday?"

"Oh, I—— Well, you see——"

Mrs. McCarran pitied his dilemma. "Mustn't ask questions at Christmas time!"

Rosie screamed, "Oh, you got a present for me, Andrew!"

Minerva said, "With all the money you'll need to patent that invention, I didn't figger you'd be buying presents, Andrew."

"When it pays off, we'll all have plenty of presents."

"It's not going to pay off."

"Now, Aunt Minerva, you can't say that for sure. You have no reason to be against it."

"When a woman's been in business as long as I have, she develops an instinct. And when my instinct says a thing won't pay off, then it won't, and that's all there is to it."

Mrs. McCarran said, "Oh, 'tis a wonderful invention. Not a day passes but I say my beads for it, and there comes a time when our Lord is bound to hear an old woman's prayers. I've seen it happen a thousand times, like a miracle, and when people work hard like Andrew and Philip——"

Minerva said coldly, "Pray tell me, Mrs. McCarran, what do you know about inventions?"

Bridie McCarran subsided unhappily, for in truth she knew nothing whatever about inventions.

4

Rosie wore her new fur neckpiece to Mass the next morning, and she refused to take it off even while she ate, though Andrew said she would spill porridge on it. Mrs. McCarran clucked over it in admiration. Minerva fingered it critically. "Rubashevski, no doubt. How much, Andrew?"

"A dollar. But the pitcher was only a quarter."

"Humph! A day's wages for nothing."

"She needs a little something to keep her warm!"

"Much warmth she'll get from that scrap of dead dog. But I will in justice say, Andrew, he didn't do you in."

Kitty said, "It's beautiful fur, Rosie." And that made Rosie flush with pride. There was really no reason why she should set any store by Kitty's approval, for Rosie was a native born American who knew what was what, and Kitty was still very Irish. But Rosie did set store by it. She was awed by Kitty's beauty and a little jealous of it: one saw few beautiful women in the mills. And Kitty had a way of dressing which made her look smart even though, on close examination, her

clothes proved to be old and shabby. Rosie felt inadequate beside her, frumpy, childish, incompetent. Of course, Rosie had a job, and Kitty didn't. But Rosie was also pregnant, which meant that advantage was only temporary. On the whole it was pleasant to have a fur neckpiece to help even up the score.

As she watched Kitty, half distrustfully, Rosie wondered why she hadn't married. She was old enough, certainly, and pretty enough. Anyone with half an eye could see that Philip was completely gone on her already, and the way she looked at him from under her lashes, she was leading him on, too. Well, it wasn't any of Rosie's business, but she couldn't help wondering. Most decent women wanted to be safely married by the time they were twenty.

Only Rosie had the slightest tinge of doubt about Kitty, however. Philip stared at her, scarcely eating, frightened at the spell she had cast over him, knowing himself ensnared. Bridie thought she looked like an angel come down to earth. Minerva had practically adopted her, even going so far as to share her bed with Kitty. Only Rosie wondered if she had any money or could earn any, or if she'd eat them out of house and home.

There were presents for everyone under Philip's little tree—even presents for Kitty. Philip had walked into town that morning and bought her a box of candy. Rosie gave her an embroidered apron, one of her wedding presents that she'd never used. Mrs. McCarran gave her Tim's rosary, and Minerva a length of cotton cloth, a second from the mill, never made up because Minerva had no time for sewing and—in her own opinion—no need for frippery in clothes.

Minerva and Bridie had laboured long and ingeniously over the presents for Philip, Andrew, and Rosie: an overcoat for Andrew, the first he'd owned in his life; a velvet coat, somewhat outmoded, for Rosie; a heavy warm sweater for Philip.

"They're not salvage, either," said Minerva, "except the yarn in the sweater. Been saving it a year, every scrap I picked up, and isn't it marvellous how Mrs. McCarran unravelled it out and dyed it? Never know it wasn't spanking new, would you? And Rosie, that coat belonged to Mrs. Pugh herself. The overcoat was Lucian Olney's."

"There's no gentleman more elegant in his dress than Mr. Lucian," said Mrs. McCarran.

"But how did you ever get them?" asked Rosie, strutting around the kitchen in the new coat.

"From Mrs. Riggs," said Minerva. "They're always giving her stuff they think is too good for the trash barrel. And as she said to me,

'Miss Hawkes,' she said, 'after sewing all the blessed day for others, I just can't face altering anything for myself.' And right now, with Miss Pugh being married, she's up to her neck in work."

"'Twas I made them over," said Bridie shyly. "I couldn't turn the velvet, of course, but with a little steam here and there——"

"Didn't she do a beautiful job?" said Minerva generously. "You know, Mrs. McCarran, if you went out as a seamstress you could easily do as well as Mrs. Riggs. I'm told she makes fifteen dollars a week."

"Thank you for the compliment, Miss Hawkes, but I couldn't. It'd mean being away from home all day."

"Do you good, give you something to live for. And soon Rosie won't be able to work—not while the baby's little, anyhow. She could do the housework."

"But my girls—I have to see to their dinners, and——" Bridie's gentle voice wavered to a stop. She looked around the kitchen vaguely, sensing that something was wrong here, yet unable to say what it was.

An awkward silence fell over them all. Andrew broke it by doing an unprecedented thing. He went to Mrs. McCarran and kissed her. "It's the handsomest overcoat I ever had in my life, Gramma." He had never before called her "Gramma."

She blushed like a girl. "Get along with you, boy, and don't be giving a lot of blarney to an old woman like me."

Then Kitty brought out her presents for them. A shirtwaist, all tucks and Irish crochet for Minerva; a pair of knitted gloves for Aunt Bridie; a petticoat for Rosie, and how she hated to part with that, for she'd nearly sewed her eyes out over the ruffle. She gave her father's pipe to Andrew, who, like most weavers, chewed tobacco to ward off the consumption that came from the sucking shuttle but who did not smoke. The silk muffler she'd knitted as a Christmas present for her father she gave to Philip. They all thanked her, and all the women kissed her. She felt a warm, generous glow, and the whole thing gave her the feeling that at last there was some place where she belonged, and some people on earth who cared about her. Although, to be sure, they were poor and of no importance whatever.

The family, replete with Christmas food, lingered over Bridie McCarran's excellent squash pie. Kitty had been in their house for more than



twenty-four hours, and she was now, irretrievably, one of them. They discussed her future, for it was now permissible to do this, although earlier it would have been presumptuous, as if they meddled in a stranger's affairs.

Rosie said, "Of course, starting at the mill at your age, and with no experience, you won't make much. But it *is* a job."

"I'd rather she didn't work in the mill," said Philip.

"You think you own her?" demanded Rosie.

Philip flushed. He left the table and went to the corner of the kitchen where he had a small desk littered with the papers dealing with his invention.

Minerva said, "You'd be foolish to go into a mill, my dear. Women are merely exploited in such places. You have to go into business for yourself if you want to have any prospects."

"And with no money?" said Kitty. "And me not knowing a soul in the place but yourselves?" But she was thinking of the glimpse she had had the day before of Mr. Lucian Olney. *He* worked in the mill. Some day, certainly, he would own the mill. Perhaps——

"She's quite right, Aunt Minerva," said Andrew. "You're not going to talk her into making the rounds with you and disgrace all of us——"

"She's not right! Going into business for yourself takes courage, a little backbone. I'll not say money doesn't help—but I'll not admit it's absolutely necessary either. *I* didn't have a cent of capital except a dime for nails I had to buy to cobble myself up a cart. And what was Mrs. Riggs's capital? A thimble and some scissors, I'll wager, and a very impressive knowledge of French."

"But Mrs. Riggs has talent!" said Rosie. "Not one person in a million can sew like Mrs. Riggs!"

"Everybody has some kind of talent," said Minerva, "if they'll only look for it. I always say, necessity is the mother of invention."

Mrs. McCarran gently patted Kitty's shoulder. "A nice job as housemaid is better than the mills, dearie."

"Bah!" said Minerva.

"Tis clean and quiet, and good wages, and the money all clear if you live in," insisted Mrs. McCarran.

"But, Gramma," said Rosie, "it ain't refined. If you go into the mill, we can eat lunch together, and I can show you the drawing in. It's done by hand anyhow, so we can go right on working when the power's off. A good drawing-in girl makes five a week."

"What's drawing in?" asked Kitty.

"Threading the harness." Rosie laughed at Kitty's bewildered expression. "I thought everybody knew what a harness is. But you'll understand when I show you how it works."

Minerva set her teacup down with an emphatic click. "You listen to me, all of you. Here you are, four young people with your whole lives before you, sitting around talking as if the only thing God will let you do with them is waste them working from dawn to dark in some mill. And you know why? Because you're lazy. The mills are there, right across the street, and all you have to do is tumble out of bed and fall into one of them. What are you, anyhow? A bunch of sheep? Do you have to kill yourselves doing what everybody else is doing?"

Rosie pouted. "Somebody has to do it. Besides, we've got to live."

"You call this living? And suppose somebody does have to do it? You're not just somebody. You're you, Rosie Hawkes. You're a whole woman, not just a pair of hands for drawing in."

Philip's mind had wandered from the conversation, a tendency it had when Minerva held forth. He said suddenly, "I say, Andrew, why couldn't drawing in be done with a machine?"

"Are you crazy?" gasped Andrew.

"No. Suppose you figured out a bar or something, like on the jacquard machine, and punched cards, only instead of having it shove the shuttle, like on a loom, you had some kind of needle——"

"What'd you do for power? Put in a special belt just to run a dainty little machine like that?"

"What's wrong with electricity? They're using a lot of electric motors in the new mills down South."

"But who'd want a machine like that? Twenty, twenty-five girls are all you need for three thousand looms. What does that amount to?"

Mrs. McCarran got up and shuffled into the dark parlour, where she sat down at the window to gaze into the night.

Rosie said, "Gramma's acting awful peculiar. I hope she isn't going to have a spell."

"Holidays always throw her off," said Minerva, beginning to pick up the dishes. Kitty unfastened the tight sleeves of her shirtwaist and pulled them back, preparing to help. "You make these pretty waists yourself?" demanded Minerva.

"Yes. I like to sew."

"You make the lace, too?"

"Yes. The Sisters taught me to crochet back in Ireland."

"Um. There's a good market for Irish crochet. I must speak to Mrs. Riggs about it."

When the kitchen was clean Philip took Kitty for a walk to show her more of the town, and it was nine o'clock before he brought her home. Andrew and Rosie had gone to bed. Minerva was in her room sorting junk to try to make space for Kitty's luggage. Mrs. McCarran still sat before the window, waiting.

The loneliness of the old woman touched Kitty, and for the first time since she had been among these people, compassion for one of them stirred her. She went up to the old woman and kissed her. "Good night, Aunt Bridie."

"Mary," whispered Mrs. McCarran. "Mary—my own sweet Mary——"

Philip said, "She's not——"

Kitty put her hand across his mouth to stop him. "Don't. Don't hurt her any more. It doesn't matter what she——"

Philip put his own hand over Kitty's, pressing her palm tight against his mouth, kissing it. He pulled her away from Mrs. McCarran. Then, in the darkness, he took her in his arms. He kissed her mouth, her eyes, her hair. "I don't like it when they look at you. I don't want anybody but me to look at you. I love you—understand? I don't want you to go to the mill. I love you. I love you." He was murmuring with his mouth against her cheek. He didn't know what he was saying, nor even that he was talking. "This was never going to happen to me, but it did. Now nobody else can have you because I love you. Now——"

"Let me go," she whispered. "You—you frighten me."

He tightened his arms around her until he could feel her heart pounding. "I'm frightened, too, and it doesn't matter. I'm not going to let you go."

She turned her face away from his, and he kissed her neck. He did not care what part of her he caressed: he wanted all of her.

"Mary?" said Mrs. McCarran querulously. "Mary! Where——"

"You're hurting me," whispered Kitty.

And he answered, "This love is not a gentle thing."

She buried her face against his shoulder, sobbing—as if her only protection from him was to draw closer to him. "God help me," she whispered, not because she hated his embrace, but because she liked it. And he was a poor man, a poor, discontented rebel.

He kissed her hair. "Your hair smells like the sea. Tomorrow we'll

get married. Then all night I'll make love to you, and the night after that, and the night——"

Minerva clumped out of her room. "Philip! Where are you? I've made room for Kitty's things." She turned toward the kitchen looking for him.

"Damn!" said Philip softly. He brushed his lips lightly over Kitty's cheek as he released her. "Don't you ever forget I love you." And he went to move her luggage into Minerva's room.

For a long while after she had gone to bed beside Minerva, who slept as energetically as she did everything else, Kitty lay still, staring at the shadows on the ceiling and at the black heaps of junk mounded in the corners. Her body was excited by Philip's caresses, and this was a new experience for her. She had never before allowed any of the scurvy men she had known to get close enough to her to caress her. But she was not thinking of Philip. She was thinking of Mr. Lucian Olney. When she went to work in the mill there would be chances to see him. She fell asleep, finally, with this realization clear in her mind: it was a good thing to know that she had this power to inflame a man.

6

The next day Minerva took Kitty with her to Rubashevski's, and for this occasion Miss Hawkes dressed in her good set of clothes. Her black skirt was neatly brushed, and instead of work boots she wore a pair of black slippers, flat heeled and strapped over the instep like a little girl's. Her bodice was of black velvet trimmed with jet, a basque waist dating from the eighties that hung on Minerva's spare frame like washing on a line. As they left the tenement she threw her old coat over this finery and jammed the velvet bonnet on her head. Kitty watched in horrified fascination as she poked the hatpins through it and tied the ragged ribbons. Then Minerva picked up her mismatched mittens and a number of untidy packages. "We're off, Mrs. McCarran," she called cheerfully to Bridie, who was dusting the parlour to repair the havoc of Christmas.

The day was bright and warm for the season. The heavy snowfall of Christmas Eve was now a residue of dirty slush on Bedford Street, and the street itself was the most congested Kitty had ever seen except for the dock districts of New York. As always during a holiday, the cotton had accumulated on the waterfront. Now the heavy drays, harnessed with double teams of Percherons, dragged slowly up the hill

from the Taunton River, the great feet of the horses clopping in the slush, their nostrils breathing steam as they strained against their loads of cotton bales. Sometimes one of the drays intruded on the trolley track, and the trolley clanged fretfully until it moved its ponderous bulk. Interspersed between the cotton drays were drays of coal; and on the other side of the car tracks, going down to the river for more cotton, more coal, were the empty wagons, their horses stepping out smartly, tossing their manes in vain freedom at the emptiness behind them.

They walked down Main Street, skirted the Pocasset Mill, and turned into Pearl Street, which Minerva dismissed as "the Jew district"—a place one need not bother to understand.

Of course it was not a ghetto, for neither law nor long-established custom forced the Jews to huddle together here on a narrow way running into a dead end at mill property. Yet, in the centre of town, one stepped without warning from industrial New England into what seemed a poignant segment of Warsaw or Kiev. Here, crammed between the rows of tenements, were the pushcarts, the signs in Yiddish, the kosher markets, the open stalls, the synagogue. Here were the fragrance of foreign foods, the sing-song nonsense of foreign tongues, the lonely barrier of foreign ways. No one told the Jews they had to live like this in the old way, the Russian, Polish way, the only way they knew. On the other hand, no one forbade them to do so. The truth was, no one cared how they lived, what they did, nor what they made of the new world in which they found themselves. Let them make themselves conspicuous with beards and skull caps if they liked; let them inconvenience themselves by keeping Sabbath on Saturday and killing their own meat. It was their business.

Minerva Hawkes, who had never examined this thesis carefully, put it like this: if they turned every place they settled into a ghetto, it must be because they liked ghettos. Every man to his taste. Personally, she didn't know any of them, and she didn't want to. Business was a different thing entirely: money talked there, not the hand that held it.

"I hope we can find one of these freaks that speaks English," said Minerva, the town's most renowned freak.

"Oh, I'd be afraid to say anything to them at all!"

"Good heavens, Kitty, they're just a bunch of foreigners—they won't bite your head off." She went up to a man standing under a rack of second-hand overcoats flapping in the wind. "I'm looking for Anton Rubashevski."

He smiled, shrugged his shoulders, shook his head helplessly. He had been in America three weeks. He had learned seven English words, only one of which she had spoken.

Minerva wagged her roses and hatpins at him severely. "You see what we're up against, Kitty."

She approached a woman standing by a cart full of bread, and received clear, though heavily accented, directions. She followed them by militantly pushing her way along, snorting when she had to walk around a cart, and taking up as much room as she could. In this milieu she felt herself to be important. As Barnabas Olney was to Andrew Hawkes, so was Minerva to the denizens of Pearl Street. By the time she reached the store that plainly proclaimed itself in English: A. Rubashevski, Merchandise, she had worked herself into a glow of superiority that boded ill for Anton.

She flounced through the door of the establishment, a large one for Pearl Street. "Come on, Kitty. Don't hang back like you're afraid of them. He'll not put anything over on me."

The store was dim, incredibly cluttered with boxes of rags; tables of cloth and clothing; shelves of crockery, glass, tin utensils; racks of clothes; and, on the floor, piles of pipe, tools, paper, and a few pieces of decrepit furniture. The only light came from a dim gas jet at the rear, where a man and a red-haired girl of about fifteen were sitting at a table reading a book. A bell attached to the door jangled to announce their entrance, and the man stood up. For an instant the light caught his face: deceptive transfiguration of human clay. "Great heavens!" breathed Minerva. "He looks like the pictures of Christ!"

He did not really. She saw that the moment he passed beyond the halo of the gas jet. He was spare, tall, about her own age. Unlike the other men of Pearl Street, he was clean-shaven and wore no skull cap. His features were thin, fine-cut, the lips slightly full, the dark eyes deepset. His brow was high and narrow; he was beginning to grow bald. Minerva, the judge of men, was puzzled by him. He did not look as she considered a Jew should look, which put her out; and he somehow seemed as foreign to Pearl Street as she was herself.

"Yes, please?"

"I've come to sell, not to buy," she said defensively.

He smiled. "Good. Good." He made a gesture as if to relieve her of her bundles.

She would not surrender them. "I'll take them to the light, if you don't mind. Come, Kitty. Follow me."

Meekly both Kitty and Rubashevski followed. The girl at the table

smiled timidly as Minerva dumped her packages down, and she said, "Hello."

"Good morning," said Minerva, with formidable correctness.

"My daughter Leah," said Mr. Rubashevski.

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure," said Minerva, not bothering to look at her.

Leah had dark red hair, large, deep blue eyes, and thin, finely cut features like her father's. Rebuffed by Minerva, she smiled at Kitty, saying, "Won't you sit down and rest while they talk?"

Kitty sat down stiffly. She was embarrassed by the foreign quality of the people and the junkiness of the store. She could think of nothing to say to Leah.

Minerva stripped the paper from Mercury with a grand gesture. The statue stood in profile to Kitty, who immediately turned her eyes from it while a scarlet blush of shame stained her face. Leah, looked at it without apparent embarrassment.

"So," said Mr. Rubashevski. "An object of art, yes?"

"How much for it?"

Mr. Rubashevski examined it carefully. "No breakages. I give you one-fifty."

"What!" gasped Minerva.

He shrugged. "Well then. One seventy-five. Higher I do not go."

"All right, all right. But there's a lot of weight to it. Just as iron it might bring more." She could bargain with the best.

"As iron I do not know. As an object of art, I get maybe two-fifty for it. In Fall River, art brings no profit."

"I know nothing about art. Junk's my business," said Minerva.

Rubashevski looked at her with new interest, trying to discover the reality of Minerva hiding behind her grotesque mask. "So? You know this business?"

"Been in it fifteen years." Her tone was still defensive: you-can't-cheat-me, my man.

"You haff a store?"

"No. I'm Andrew Hawkes's aunt. You know him."

"Ah!" Enlightenment dawned so clearly over Rubashevski's face that Minerva wondered what Andrew could have been telling people about her. "Well. Let us see what else you bring me, yes?"

Minerva opened her other packages, revealing a sad collection of worn-out clothes, broken tools, old shoes, chipped crockery. Perhaps he felt sorry for her: he gave her another dollar and a half for the lot. It was on the tip of her tongue to ask how he made any money, paying

such prices, but she caught herself in time and merely said, "You do a good business here, Mr. Rubashevski?"

He shrugged. "What is good business? We live, Leah and I. Sufficient to eat, a roof, she goes to school publicly, and what she learns she teaches me. No one bothers us." He laughed. "Is that not good business?"

Minerva looked at the big girl sitting idle, a book in her hands. Such a sight was unknown in the circles in which she moved. "How is it she's not working in a mill?"

"No. Of my own I take care," said Mr. Rubashevski gently.

He escorted them to the door, where Minerva lingered while Kitty stepped out into the street. "I don't mean to pry, Mr. Rubashevski, but your English is very good. Have you been in this country long?"

"Seven years. Leah teaches me English that she learns in the school. She is severe to me for my mistakes. I also learn about the politics, so I may become a citizen."

He was holding the door open for her, but Minerva lingered.

"Were you in business for yourself in the old country?"

"I—— Perhaps you call it that, yes. In Poland, I was a doctor."

"What!"

"A doctor of medicine."

Minerva backed out the door, gaping at him. "Well, I must say, I——"

He smiled at her apologetically, wishing to allay her embarrassment. "If you have more goods, I welcome it. Any time."

"Yes—thank you—I——" Minerva stuttered as she stumbled into the street.

She walked home at a rapid pace, cogitating, forgetful of Kitty tagging along beside her. Minerva sometimes suffered from one great discomfort: she was honest with herself. When knowledge came to her piecemeal she absorbed it without undue trouble. When it came to her in a lump of revelation she was naturally disturbed, for then she had to readjust herself quickly to fit the new facts. Previous to this moment, it had never dawned on her that a foreigner might be a doctor, that a Jew might look like a normal human being, nor that a man without half trying could make her, Minerva Hawkes, feel like a fool. To ease her conscience she spent the rest of the day furiously sorting junk, and she spoke not another word to anyone while she faced the facts and made herself over to fit them.



Following the sign with the pointing finger and the word "Office", Kitty climbed the worn wooden stairs.

She was disobeying the Hawkes to come here. Philip, Andrew, and Minerva had practically forbidden her to seek a job in the mill. Even Bridie didn't like the notion. They said, go to work in the glove factory, go into service, work for Mrs. Riggs, make Irish crochet, but they did not tell her how to find such jobs. Instead, they all went off each day to work, leaving her alone with Bridie; and even Bridie went to the mill during the dinner hour with the lunches she packed every day for her dead daughters. Sometimes she would be gone for hours, wandering through the mill looking for them, and Kitty would be left alone in the tenement with nothing to do except to plan how she might meet Mr. Lucian Olney, and what she would say to him when she did meet him.

Philip and Andrew spent the evenings bending over papers spread out on the kitchen table. Inventions. They talked, dreamed, slept, ate inventions. If Philip really cared about her, Kitty thought, he might pay a little attention to her in the evenings. Not that she *wanted* him to, since she had better plans for her life than to marry Philip Hawkes. It was only that a man shouldn't kiss you and tell you he loved you and upset you that way and then ignore you; as if he'd been out of his mind when he said and did such things; or as if, come morning, he'd changed his mind and wasn't gentleman enough to apologize. Inventions indeed!

The office started abruptly at the head of the stairs. To Kitty's right was an oak railing fencing off a space filled with desks with men working at them. On her left was a clear space, hall-like, bare except for some straight chairs against the wall and some cuspidors on the floor. The chairs, four of them occupied by well-dressed men who were smoking and talking, faced a row of doors, all closed. Directly opposite the head of the stairs was a barred window, like a teller's cage in a bank, with a sign over it: "Information." With her knees trembling, Kitty walked toward it.

"Yes, miss?" said the drab clerk in the cage.

"I'd like to see Mr. Lucian Olney, please." She was so frightened, so appalled at the bold thing she was doing, that she could hardly get the words out.

"You have an appointment?"

"No. I——"

"What did you want to see him about? Perhaps I can help you?" His dour face cracked slightly in the suggestion of a smile.

"No. You see, it's a—a *personal* matter."

He took her name, nodded toward the group of chairs, and told her to wait. He'd been through this before with Mr. Lucian, who was entirely too free with the women. The clerk sincerely hoped that he would settle down, once he was safely married to Miss Pugh, for the good of all concerned.

Kitty took the chair farthest from the waiting men. They talked and she listened, although she could make nothing of what they said.

The tall, sandy-haired man said, "Pugh's short fifty thousand bales on March middlings."

The youngish man with red hair whistled softly. "Wow! You carrying him for any more, Ingram?"

They looked at Ingram, who had a round, smooth, cheerful face. When he spoke, Kitty decided he was some sort of foreigner, for he had a most peculiar accent. "Gentlemen, Mr. Pugh now regards me like I was Sherman and he was Georgia." They all laughed. "Most probably he's spoke his last words to me. I called on him to inform him I'm holding a hundred bales Egyptian middling for him. Kept me waiting four hours. Then he calls me in and says to me, and gentlemen, I quote: 'Get t'hell out of here, you dirty rebel bastard, and don't you show your stinking face in my mill again!'"

Red-hair glanced uneasily at Kitty, but her beautiful face looked so bewildered that he decided she must be a French girl who didn't understand English—a greenhorn just down from Canada. "Sounds just like the son of a bitch. I'm *de trop* there, too—called him once."

"Called him, sir! I sold him out!"

The fat man in a checked coat cried, "Great guns, Ingram, are you trying to commit suicide? Nobody sells out Pugh! It just isn't done!"

"Must of been pure cussed ignorance, then, because I sure did it. Now mind, he never gave me more than a pitiful five per cent. margin. Rightly speaking, when a man's cotton breaks, either that man covers, or he gets sold out—and I don't care what his name is. Gentlemen, I may commit suicide, but I sure aim to die solvent."

Check-coat said to sandy-hair, "Watch yourself, Dubbley. Be no joke to be caught with Pugh fifty thousand bales short in a rising market."

"Who says it's going to rise?"

"Barnabas is long on March middling."

Dubbley: "Is Barnabas Olney God? He can be wrong just once, can't he?"

Ingram: "I never in my born days saw cotton traded like y'all trade it in this damyankee town."

Dubbley: "What're you growling about? Pugh gets his knife into you, you can always skedaddle back to Mobile. Me—I got to put up with it."

"But Pugh needs that 'Gyptian. He's got a time-penalty contract with Pacific for five thousand pieces of lawn, and if he don't get that 'Gyptian first of the week, he's right likely to have to shut down."

Red-head: "He'll farm it out to Olney."

Check-coat: "Can't. Olney's running full on broadcloths, with a backlog that'll carry him through February."

"Reckon he can use that 'Gyptian?"

"At how much?"

"Nine and a half."

Dubbley said, "He wouldn't pay that. He's got upwards of two hundred bales he bought last summer at seven."

Ingram: "And I got a load of Sea Island coming in first of the week for Pugh."

Dubbley: "I'll take that at tomorrow's opening. I've a customer in New Bedford can use it. Anybody know how much Egyptian is lying around town?"

Check-coat: "Mighty damned little. Who uses it but Olney and Pugh?"

Ingram grinned. "You toss it around between you, then, gentlemen. I sure am going to enjoy seeing Pugh have to pay sixteen cents for that 'Gyptian."

"Gad," said Check-coat, "I don't see how he stays in business. He was a fool to convert to fine-goods."

"Monkey see, monkey do. Barnabas is making a pile at it, so——"

"Olney don't have a tobacco-cloth mentality. And if there was ever a man could trade cotton, it's Barnabas Olney. He has a sixth sense tells him which way the market's going."

Ingram said dreamily, "When I make my pile in this damyankee town of yours, reckon I'll get on down to Alabama and build me a nice little old cotton mill and watch the money grow while I rest my weary bones."

Check-coat: "Cotton textiles'll never amount to a hill of beans in the South."

"Those're fighting words, sir!"

"Nothing personal intended. It's just a fact. We have the plant and the know-how, and we're a damned sight closer to the coal. I can show you figures proving Fall River can have cotton shipped in cheaper than the Carolinas can get it by rail. Remember a couple years ago, when print cloth started dropping—little over-production? Fall River shut down just two weeks and New York nearly went crazy. Now it stands to reason when you have the market sewed up like that, the South doesn't have a chance."

"Some right nice mills down there, though. New. I was just talking to a salesman from Draper Loom the other morning, and he told me ninety per cent. of their new automatics they're selling down South. Now it seems to me——"

"Automatics! They can have 'em! It's not fancy do-dads on a loom that's going to make or break Fall River. When you come down to cases, there's just no substitute to Yankee ingenuity."

"Reckon so. Reckon it must be ingenuity's going to make Pugh pay sixteen cents tomorrow for 'Gyptian cotton he could of had yes-tiddy for nine and a half."

"But if you'll notice," said Check-coat drily, "he's still making money."

Lucian Olney opened his door. "You wanted to see me, Miss McCarran?" He nodded, smiling, at the brokers, who were waiting for his father. "How's your wife, Dubbley? Better, I hope?"

"She's fine now, thanks. But it was nip and tuck there for a while. Terrible thing, this appendicitis."

"Um. Seems to be quite an epidemic of it, too. I'm glad to hear she's all right now." He held the door open for Kitty.

The brokers, realizing that she must have after all understood their talk, felt slightly uneasy as they watched her pass through it. A good-looker, but Lucian Olney had always been able to pick 'em. His little secrets were safe with them. They liked him, found his manner friendly, his apparent concern for their personal troubles gratifying. Of course the Olneys were all like that, not high-hat in spite of their position. Then, too, some day Lucian would certainly be owning and managing mills, and it was as well to look at things with the long view, to get in on the ground floor if you could. Yes, they liked Lucian, and if a pretty little piece happened to call on him during business hours, they would never find it necessary to mention the fact.

Lucian himself was somewhat startled by his beautiful visitor. He had no real power in the mill's management: he was, in fact, little more than his father's clerk, and most people knew this. Therefore, when

they wanted anything, they went to Barnabas. What was she after, then? A job? The superintendent did the hiring. Funds for some charity? His father took care of that. Some social affair? But obviously she was a low person, ineligible for any sort of society. It did not cross his mind that she wanted him, and that she had used the only approach—the crude, direct approach—open to her to meet him.

The gulf between the immigrant mill worker and the native mill manager was a vast one. Not only were the economic differences so great as to make them seem like two different orders of people, but there were equally great differences in education and viewpoint. The Irish, French-Canadian, and Portuguese mill workers were all Catholic; the managers were Protestants with a rigorous Puritan heritage. The workers worshipped colourful personal gods, and they remembered feudalism: they thought in hierarchies. The God of the managers had become so tenuous that now He scarcely cast a shadow over their lives. In their world every man was on his own, without divine assistance; and in the last analysis his virtue was measured by the size of his bank account and by the extent of his conformity to the mores and ideals of the managerial class.

The workers wanted what the managers had, but they did not yet know the magical incantations, the proper spellbinding gestures, that would give it to them. All they had done so far was to take the first step: they had come to America, had set their feet on the magic ground. The managers wanted to keep what they had, although they still did not realize this clearly, for as yet they had no serious idea that anyone would presume to try to rob them of it. Nevertheless, they were beginning to feel an obscure need to protect themselves, to widen the gulf between themselves and the strangers, to keep more for themselves and to give the strangers less. It would have been a betrayal of this position for Lucian to fall in love with a mill girl. It would have been treason for him to marry one. The Puritan code of repression was being revived virulently to protect the virtue of the managers. Lucian would be ostracized from the society of his kind if he tampered with a mill girl, and he knew it. If he wanted to make love to an immigrant, he could safely do so only in a brothel.

Until he saw Kitty he had never been tempted to transgress the code, for the samples he had seen of the lower classes did not run to beauty. Nor, for that matter, did the samples he had seen of the upper classes. In fact, beauty was so rare in Lucian's world that, except for the happy accident of Kitty, he might have lived all his life without ever seeing an authentic example of it, except on the stage.

She plainly read the flattery in his grey eyes, and she flushed, dropping her long lashes in the appearance of modesty. And in her turn she estimated him: the elegance of his slate-grey worsted, the linen starched board-stiff, the sombrely striped foulard tie, the flashing diamond stick-pin, the heavy gold watch chain. He had the sort of face that was stamped on old Roman coins: the idealized Emperor—eyes somewhat piercing with a hint of cruelty, nose large and aquiline, chin prominent and rounded. His brown hair was slightly curly, and he was clean shaven, without even a moustache.

Kitty thought him the handsomest man in the world, but he was not, for Barnabas, at forty-five, was better looking than Lucian at twenty-two. The Roman coin face was known in the town as “the Olney looks”. They improved with maturity, and divergences grew gradually in these austere Emperor faces because of differences of character. But, by and large, the Olney looks passed from father to son with so little change that the portrait in the Olney dining-room of the middle-aged Puritan divine might have been Barnabas in fancy dress, and the picture of the young whaling captain in the drawing-room might have been Lucian.

Lucian bowed. “I’m at your service, ma’am.”

Kitty’s face blazed scarlet. Later, when she tried to place the time exactly, she thought it was then that she really fell in love with him. “Oh, I—please, sir, could you see your way clear to give me a job?”

He was about to tell her it was not his place to hire people when he remembered Adelaide Pugh. A vision of her mouselike, sallow face rose in his mind, a face of almost pristine dreariness, with its acne scars and blotches, its pale eyes and colourless lashes and high-domed, immature brow. Adelaide of the lank, hay-coloured hair, the cold, damp hands, the scared voice that alternately piped and whispered—Adelaide, sole heir to the Pugh millions. At this moment she was probably sitting in her walnut and marble bedroom embroidering yards of ruffles for her trousseau underwear. Or doggedly memorizing another of those ghastly elocution poems to quote at him. “Of course,” he said, “a job. Will you please sit down here, Miss McCarran?” He smiled at her, the frank, disarming Olney smile. “Have you any experience in mill work?”

“That I haven’t, sir, but I’m willing to start low and work up, if only you’ll give me a trial.”

“But our people start as children, and by your age they know their trade thoroughly. And if you don’t have a special skill——”

"I'll learn, sir. Rosie Hawkes is my cousin, and she's going to teach me the drawing in."

He drew his brows together in a thoughtful frown, an expression of his father's. He used all the Olney mannerisms, put them on and off in almost conscious mimicry, for they had a certain value and meaning in his circles. Lucian scorned nothing of value if he could get it without trouble. "But—please don't misunderstand me, but you're very beautiful. Surely you can find something easier and pleasanter than working in our mills. Perhaps if you look around a little——"

"Oh, I can't! I've no money at all." She opened her eyes wide, looking at him frankly, almost boldly. She smiled slightly. She was no longer afraid, nor did she feel, any longer, quite inferior to him. As a male, his situation in this early phase of their acquaintance was not wholly advantageous. And if perhaps he did not yet want what she had to give him, he could be made to want it in time.

"I'm only trying to consider your best interests. If you like, I'll speak to my mother. She may know someone who needs a maid."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, sir!" Her shocked exclamation denied that she had ever done it.

"But you'd earn three dollars a week and board."

"Och, it ain't refined! And I have to come up in the world, seeing I'm all alone now, with nobody at all to look out for me."

"I see." He was inwardly amused, yet pleased. Ambition made her the more vulnerable. He would put her in a really low job, he thought, something gruelling and hopeless, from which she would cry to him for rescue. "I'll give you a note to the foreman and ask him to find a place in the mill for you with Rosie, so she can help take care of you. I shouldn't want you to get hurt."

"And why should I be hurt, sir?"

"We've been forced to hire a rough element lately. Portuguese from the Azores. Not the same type at all as our English, Irish, and French people. And don't hesitate to come to me if anything bothers you." He handed her the note.

He held the door open for her, and as she passed through it, her shoulder brushed his lightly. Even so brief a contact made her feel dizzy. She had an almost irresistible impulse to lean against him, to beg him to take care of her. But she knew what happened to girls who gave too much, too soon. Therefore she merely thanked him demurely. As she descended the stairs she held her back straight and swung her hips ever so slightly.

He watched her out of sight, desiring her, and mentally berating himself for a fool. That she was there to be had was obvious to him by the time she was out of sight. He imagined that if he had simply seized her and kissed her, she would not have fought too hard. The trouble was, one simply didn't do such things—not in that direct, primitive fashion. And the whole encounter had been so unexpected. A man is not prepared to have a beauty walk into his office in the middle of a working day. All the same, he'd been a lunkhead to let her go without even trying to make an engagement of some sort with her. And perhaps he'd been even more of a fool to give her a job: it was impossibly difficult to see a mill girl socially. But there'd be a way, somehow. There always was, for Lucian Olney. It would only take a little planning.

He would have been startled, even frightened, if he had known that Kitty too was planning, and that her plan included marriage, which certainly his did not.

8

They rode the trolley up Pleasant Street through Flint Village to the end of the line. Kitty wore her best clothes, Philip his good, black suit and new sweater. No overcoat, of course. She still did not understand this: how they could all earn such high wages, five, seven, eight dollars a week, and have no warm clothes, too few blankets, insufficient oil for the lamps. That morning, when she and Rosie were dressing to go to church, Andrew had discovered there was not enough coal to last out the day, and there wasn't enough money in the house to buy any. Kitty gave him a dollar from the few she had left, but she could not help thinking there must be bad management somewhere. Then, because it was Sunday and no places nearby were open, Andrew and Philip had to take Minerva's cart and go all the way down to the wharf for a sack of coal. By the time Kitty and Rosie returned from Mass, the tenement was cold and everyone was in a bad humour, growling at everyone else about what he did with his money, and Andrew snapped at Minerva, "If Rubashevski gave you over three dollars for that junk I'd just like to know what in hell you did with it. That's all."

"It's none of your business what I did with it, and I'll thank you to keep foul language off your tongue when speaking to me, Andrew."

Rosie had morning sickness. She was fretful, and anything irritated her when she didn't feel well. She whined, "Don't bait your Aunt,



Andrew. Like as not she didn't get more'n a dollar, fifty cents, maybe——"

With great dignity Minerva said, "I'll have you know, Rosie Donovan, I'm not a liar. If I said Rubashevski gave me three and a quarter, then he gave me three and a quarter."

"All right," shouted Andrew. "Nobody's calling you a liar. But what in the name of God did you *do* with it? Did you happen to mistake it for——"

"Don't argue with her, Andrew. If it's gone, it's gone. No, Gramma, I can't eat a thing. My stomach's so queasy I——"

"Just a bit of hot tea, dearie. To please me. 'Tis the best thing in the world for settling——"

"I'm *not* arguing. Either she got three and a quarter, or she didn't, and I've only asked the plain and civil question, what in hell she did with it. That's all. Just the plain and ci——"

Minerva said, "Far be it from me to throw off on anyone for extravagance, Andrew, but it might not be amiss to call your attention to the fact that people who think they can afford furs and Beleek china are hardly in a position to——"

Andrew banged the table. "What about the rent? Are you going to be here tomorrow to tell Mr. Olney's men, well now, I *did* have three dollars, but it just happened I threw it in the gutter?"

"Six dollars," whined Rosie. "We still owe him for last week. Oh, Mother of God, I've got to lie down."

This crude reminder of the load of debt they carried sobered them. Silence fell upon the kitchen. They could hear Philip's pencil scratch against his penny ruler as he drew a line on the picture of his invention. Gramma creaked to her feet, picked up some empty cups, took them to the sink, and began to hum one of her sad tunes as she rinsed them.

Minerva said quietly, "If you must know, Andrew, I bought a hat with it."

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," breathed Rosie.

Philip looked up from his drawing and stared at his aunt.

"A—six dollars rent owing, and not a shovel of coal in the house, and you bought a *hat*?" Andrew's expression as he stared at Minerva was almost frightened. "Have you gone out of your mind? What in blazes will you do with it?"

"I shall wear it. After all, when a woman is in business for herself, it is necessary to——"

"A *new* hat?" whispered Rosie.

"A new hat, my dear Rosie. A woman owes it to herself and to her

family to make a certain impression. If one is going to get on in business, one must——”

Philip said drily, “Doesn’t that depend on the business, Aunt Minerva?”

Minerva ignored him. “After all, when one is required to make numerous contacts with people of the world, one owes it to oneself——”

Suddenly Andrew laughed. “All right, Aunt Minerva. You win. Let’s see the hat, though. How about it?”

“Ought to be swell for three and a quarter,” said Rosie.

“That’s an extremely common word, Rosie,” said Minerva as she strode into her room for the hat. It was a plain, grey felt sailor with a black goose quill sticking straight up in the centre of the front.

“Gee, it’s awful plain for all that money, ain’t it?” asked Rosie, disappointed in it.

“I think not. Mrs. Riggs considers it in very proper taste for a business woman. ‘Miss Hawkes,’ she said, ‘the important thing is Line. Simple, chick, and uncluttered,’ she said. ‘Above all, *Line*. There is nothing so daymoday as the unnecessary frill, Miss Hawkes.’” Those were her very words.”

“Well—I suppose she knows what she’s talking about,” said Rosie doubtfully.

Philip asked, “Are you going to wear it to work in, Aunt Minerva?” He had a vivid picture of her wearing the hat of uncluttered line as she poked through trash cans, as she plodded doggedly up the hills behind her too-heavy pushcart, or clomped in and out of the tenement with her loads of junk.

“For certain aspects of my work, yes. For others, no.”

Philip turned back to his drawing. A woman of two worlds, he thought. This did not appear to him to be funny. He resented Minerva’s pushcart, hated it as he hated the knowledge that Kitty would work in the mill. These were not laughable things to him.

The excitement over, Rosie went to lie down. Minerva jammed the new hat on her head defiantly and flounced out with two string bags of junk for Rubashevski. Andrew began to fuss with the broken bedroom chair. Mrs. McCarran got out the ironing-board and set the flat irons on the stove. Philip said to Kitty, “I’ll show you more of the town, if you like.”

Thus they were riding the trolley through the Flint, and he hadn’t said a word since they’d left the tenement. She turned to him. “Why do they call it Flint Village? Isn’t it part of the town?”

"It's named after the Flint Mill. The mill came first, then the tenements and stores. Except for the centre, the whole town's like that. Mill villages. There's the Globe, Mechanicsville, Border City—all sort of off by themselves and all part of Fall River."

She looked out the window at the streets banked with tenements: some tall and fancy with balconies, bay windows, dormers; some tall and oblong, their bleak façades flush with the sidewalk. They were all built of wood and painted dark brown, dark red, or battleship grey. Many of the small stores were open and doing a fair business. Ricketty children played in the streets, and the sallow, undersized men who were typical of the town lounged around the doorways, talking.

"They look sort of foreign," said Kitty.

"They're French-Canadians, mostly, in the Flint. Queer ducks. They won't join the unions. Makes it tough on the rest of us. Andrew thinks they're nothing but a bunch of scabs."

"It's queer, having so many foreigners around, all talking different languages. Do you like them?"

"The Frenchies? I don't really know 'em. I suppose they'll be all right once they shake down and get wise. It was the Frenchies helped break the mulespinners' union. Mules are tricky, so it was a good tight union, all skilled men, and there weren't enough of us when things were booming. So we thought we were safe a few years back when we went out on strike, tied the mills up good. But the owners bought new ring-spinning frames, and they dragged the old mules up on the roofs and dumped 'em. Some of them came down so hard they sank a foot into the ground. We just had to stand in the streets and watch it, watch our jobs gone for good. Then they put Frenchies and women on the rings."

"But you spin mules now."

"Mr. Olney thinks only mules spin a good enough thread for fine goods."

"Well, he surely knows his business."

Philip shrugged. "Maybe. Usually, though, a mill does best to use the newest, most automatic machinery it can get. Machines will always be cheaper than men, in the long run." He put his arm across the back of the seat, not quite touching her shoulder. "Listen, Kitty, do we have to talk about the mills on Sunday?"

"But you work on the inventions on Sunday."

"That's different."

"If I'm going to work in the mill, though, I ought to know something about it. Now, shouldn't I?"

"You'll find out soon enough."

"Philip, why do you all hate it so, when it's the thing gives you a living?"

"Not everyone hates it. The Frenchies and Portuguese think it's wonderful. But they haven't been here long. Probably it is better than starving in Quebec or the Azores. My father saw nothing wrong with it. Tim McCarran thought it was all right even when he was coughing his lungs out with the cotton fever. Rosie doesn't mind it."

"Sure, you and Andrew are just discontented then." She smiled at him to take the sting from her words.

He shrugged. "Well, we're the second generation. We're Americans."

"What's that to do with it? 'Tis still bad to be discontented."

"For Americans it seems to be normal. Must be something in the air. Or perhaps we inherit it from our immigrant fathers. Only the discontented come here. It's a tremendous thing to leave everything you know and take up a new life across the world. Perhaps that effort exhausts their discontent, temporarily. And they land here broke, but full of hope and faith. They have to do all the dirty work like tending looms, mining coal, building railroads, because they're broke. But their hope and faith keep telling them it's all right, it's only temporary, this is the land of opportunity. And they see the mill and mine and railroad owners rolling in gold, and they realize these are the second and third generation Americans. The trick then is to make themselves over into the Yankee image. To get rid of the foreign ways and foreign language, to get out of the immigrant ruck and into the Yankee élite. Then you, too, can make a million dollars. Our fathers spent so much time making themselves over into Americans they hardly had time to complain about the dirty work they were doing. Besides, they could remember having no work, and the dirtiest job on earth is better than no job at all. But people like Andrew and me—we were born Americans. We have time to be discontented."

"My father never drew a contented breath," said Kitty, "and he was Irish to the bone. And everybody that had a bit of money, he hated them like poison. But really, Philip, 'tis only a matter of luck and the Grace of God that some stay on the bottom and others rise to the top."

"This is the end of the line, so let's get out and walk around the pond." After he'd helped her down the high trolley step, he said, "Luck helps, of course. But a bit of work along the way does no harm at all, now."

She flushed at his friendly imitation of her brogue. "You needn't be mimicking me now, Philip. Five years ago 'twas much thicker I talked. In no time now after I go working in the mill and hear others talking all the time, I'll be speaking as good American as the rest of you."

He laughed.

"What's funny about that?"

"You'll never hear anybody talk in a mill." But he didn't tell her what was really funny: that she, too, wanted desperately to sound, and look, and act like an American.

"You mean the bosses are so hard they won't let you talk?"

"No. I mean it's a physical impossibility. Mills are noisy."

"And there's something else on my mind now. How is it when you all make such good wages you've never enough to go round? All together you must make twenty, twenty-five dollars a week. 'Tis a fortune, Philip!"

"It would be, if it would only last. But it never does. Even in good years the mills are always down part of the time, and in bad years they're down more than they're working. So we get in debt. And things are always happening you can't foresee. Last winter Aunt Minerva had pneumonia and she couldn't go out for two months. And now Rosie's going to have a baby—that doesn't cost much, but it costs something. People get hurt——"

"But how, if they're careful?"

"Oh, fights in the mills. Slipping on the floors there, having accidents at the machines. Or take Tim McCarran. He was a long time dying, Kitty. And then there was his funeral to pay for."

"I never could figure how Aunt Bridie lived after Uncle Tim died."

"Mr. Olney took care of her. He does that sort of thing."

The winter dusk began to fall: cold, depressing grey light over the grey water of the lonesome pond. Kitty's cheeks glowed with colour. Her eyes were deep blue, smudged with their dark lashes. Philip said, "When are you going to marry me, Kitty?"

Her heart pounded. She knew she loved not him, but Lucian Olney. It was Lucian Olney she wanted, not Philip Hawkes. But it was only Philip she had much chance of getting. And say what you will, there is a pleasure in being loved if one is lonely in a strange place, facing a strange life. She said cautiously, "We hardly know each other. In Ireland, we'd first have to have a matchmaker, and then we'd be courting for years, and then perhaps——"

"But this isn't Ireland."

"Besides, you're a Protestant."

"That doesn't matter. Look at Rosie and Andrew."

"They're not really married in the eyes of God."

"The eyes of the law are good enough for me."

Oh, he was no better than her father! "It's no good, Philip, marrying a man that's against everything. Hating the mills that give you your bread——"

"You don't know, Kitty. You've never been in a mill."

"Philip, there's nothing ahead for a woman who's chained to a restless man. Eating his heart out to change the world——"

"What's wrong with changing things? If something's not good enough, make it better. If it's mean and rotten, smash the hell out of it." Suddenly he laughed. "It's like Mrs. Riggs says—we can't let the world get daymoday."

"I don't know what that means."

"Oh, forget it—it's just a joke."

"It's wrong to joke about the world, Philip. God's got reasons for having things like they are. It's not for poor men that're sinful all through to go saying what's right and what's wrong."

"If we don't, who will? Apparently God's too busy to bother."

"You wouldn't say that if you were a Catholic."

"Oh, come off it, Kitty. Even a Catholic can have common sense."

"That he can. And he knows it's common sense to do what the priest tells him, and not to go fretting his heart out trying to change things."

He laughed, dismissing her earnest nonsense. "Well, at least there's still room in the world for a difference of opinion."

She looked so sad, so like a hurt, puzzled child, that he grabbed her and kissed her. It was easy, when he held her in his arms, to convince himself that she did not know what she was saying. He held her tighter, swept into helplessness on the tide of his desire for her.

And she—she liked his passion and his kisses. It was Lucian Olney she loved. And she knew that of all things on earth, passion is the most sinful. But she liked Philip's kisses all the same, and she did not fight against him.

A lamplighter passed them, carrying his long pole. He was an old man; he stared at them as if it were a remote, impossible thing to see a man and a girl standing in a close embrace beside a grey pond in the cold December dusk.

With his mouth against her cheek, Philip murmured, "We can be married any time. Tomorrow. The next day."

"Not without any money, we can't."

"Money doesn't really matter."

She pulled away from him. "There you're wrong, Philip. And I'll not marry a man that thinks otherwise, so he'll push me down in the dirt all my life, and keep me there till I'm old and ugly and half out of my mind!"

He stepped away from her and walked rapidly back to the trolley. On the long trip home they did not speak to each other again.

9

Kitty was ashamed of Rosie's old cotton dress. Never had she worn such a rag. To imagine Mr. Lucian Olney seeing her in it was an agony. "I won't wear it!" she shouted. "I won't!"

Philip, angry because she was going into the mill at all, and taking it out on her, roared, "Oh yes, you will! You'll not go into any spinning room with woollens on."

Andrew said, "It's too hot. You'd faint."

Hurried as they all were so early in the morning, and sick as Rosie was with nausea, she went into Minerva's room with Kitty and made her take off her decent clothes and all the petticoats. "And your corset. You can't work in a corset."

"But Rosie, no decent woman——"

"And your stockings. Hurry up, Kitty, we haven't got all day. Now take your drawers off."

"I'll not! I'll not go working stark naked, Rosie Hawkes!"

"Oh, all right, keep your drawers. But you'll be sorry." Rosie pulled the disgraceful rag over Kitty's head. Cheap, limp cotton. It hung like a sack with holes cut for neck and arms, a loose waist, a skimpy skirt that came eight inches from the floor.

"It's too short," said Kitty.

"No. Anything longer would get in your way. And if there's anything Gramma hates it's washing that dirty oil out." Rosie stuck her head out the bedroom door, shouting, "Gramma! We got any rags? For Kitty's feet."

"I won't wear rags on my feet. Not when I've fine stout brogans."

"Oh, yes, you will. Jesus, Mary 'n—it's almost six! Kitty, do you *have* to be so stubborn?"

"I won't wear rags on my——"

"Andrew! Make her take them. Oh, God help me, I'll be late! Andrew!"

"I have the rags. Come on, you two. Philip—hey!—Oh, he's gone. Hurry up, can't you? We'll have to run for it."

Kitty thrust her arms into her coat. Bare-legged, her brogans rubbing her bare feet, she raced down the stairs, across the street, dodged a dray that was already creaking up the hill in the black morning, and into the courtyard of the mill.

Rosie pulled her through the door, into the cloth room and through it, into the carding-room, where, even after a day of rest, the air was hazy with cotton fibres, then into a long room bristling with mammoth machines, strung overhead with belts and pipes.

"Have to call him before they get the steam up." And Rosie shouted, "Mr. Sankey! Mr. *Sankey!*"

The incoming workers pushed them. A big Portuguese woman shoved Kitty against a machine. A man tramped over her feet. A boy with a club foot dragged past her, grinning impishly. "No lying on the machinery, lady," he said, laughing at her.

"Mr. *Sankey!*" shouted Rosie. "Mr. SANKEY!"

A low burring noise throbbed through the building. The belts overhead shivered, flapped, beat, slowly began to move like a hundred vultures stretching wicked wings. "Oh Lord, steam's up! He'll never hear me now. Mr. SANKEY!"

The belts gathered speed: flap, beat, flap, slap, beat, faster, faster—live steam hissed into the room from vents in the walls. The floor began to throb. A small, wiry man wearing cotton jeans and no shirt stepped from behind a spinning frame. "Somebody call me?" he shouted.

The steam hissed louder through the vents. From the pipes overhead spouted little jets of water. The machine Kitty leaned against shivered, and she sprang forward as if it had pushed her, so great was her fright of it.

Rosie went up to Mr. Sankey. He bent over. She put her mouth against his ear and spoke. "My cousin Kitty McCarran. She has a note from Mr. Lucian. He says she should work here. She doesn't know anything, but——"

Mr. Sankey nodded at Kitty, smiling. She smiled back stiffly. "Let's have the note," he hissed into her ear, making it sting.

She handed it to him. While he read it the ceiling started to shake as if giants trod the floor above. Now the belts were moving so fast they were merely a blur overhead. Through the ceiling came a great



whirring roar, making all the previous noise seem calm by contrast. The weavers on the floor above had started up their looms.

Rosie smiled at Kitty, gave a little wave of her hand, and went away. Kitty felt deserted, unspeakably alone. Some one started the machine beside her. A huge cylinder began to move, carrying a sheet of cotton down over other cylinders and into tubes where fluffy ropes of cotton came out. She watched, half fascinated, half terrified.

Mr. Sankey motioned for her to follow him. He led her a zig-zag course, in and out among the spinning frames. She looked at the women tending them. Their bodies moved visibly under the worn cotton dresses which unmercifully revealed sagging breasts, protruding bellies, the ham-like structure of a fat woman's thigh. There were women of all ages from girls of twelve, thin, sallow, bow-legged, to old women with gnarled hands and patient faces, deeply lined. Quite a few of the women were pregnant, and Kitty felt ashamed for them. They all had bound their feet and legs in rags, filthy from the machine oil. She remembered that Andrew had gone off with her own rags, and she was glad of this. She did not want to work like a serf of old times with rags on her feet.

Suddenly she slipped on the floor and fell. Mr. Sankey helped her up. "Floor's slippery from the oil—have to watch it." His breath whistled into her ear.

She began to feel unbearably warm. She pushed back her shawl and took off her coat. They passed an open door. She inhaled the cold air and felt it wash over her body like the breath of heaven. Mr. Sankey closed the door, and the wet hot air of the mill again filled her lungs. Suddenly she realized the place smelled. It smelled of steam, oil, grease, sweat, urine. It smelled like clothes being washed. As they walked on she caught whiffs now of this smell, now of that one, but the sharp sour smell of urine grew persistently stronger.

Mr. Sankey stopped before a door with "Female" painted on it in flaking white letters. "Leave your coat in there."

She opened the door and stepped inside. Like a physical force the stench of the place pushed against her. She held her breath. The room had rows of hooks around the walls on which hung coats, shawls, sweaters, jackets piled on top of each other. In one corner were four wooden lockers, their broken doors gaping open. A slime of filth oozed over the floor. At one end of the room was a partition with a space in it where there should have been a door. Through this hole she saw two overflowing water closets and part of another. She took a step forward, holding her breath. Her shoe squelched in the muck on

the floor. As if her movement were a signal, a grey shawl slipped from the top of an overloaded hook. Like something alive it slid gently onto the floor and lay there in a heap, soaking up the stinking filth.

Stifled by nausea, she pushed open the door behind her, stepped back into the spinning-room, bumped into Mr. Sankey. She began to run blindly forward. After an instant of shocked hesitation, he ran after her. She slipped again, fell, and again he helped her up. "Take your coat back there," he whispered.

She shook her head, and like a child, started to cry. Her mouth twisted, the tears welled into her eyes, spilled over, and rolled down her cheeks. He stared at her, puzzled, shocked. He felt unable to cope with a beautiful woman who cried without noise—though in that place the sobs of titans would surely have been drowned.

He pulled her along until they came to another door. He opened it, led her on to a stair landing, and shut the door. The noise lessened enough so that they could hear each other speak. "Now, what's the matter with you? Why didn't you leave your coat?"

"Dirty. That place is dirty."

He shrugged. "Mills ain't supposed to be palaces, and if you fancy yourself a young lady, you shouldn't of come here. How can you work with a coat over your arm?"

Kitty brushed the back of her hand over her eyes. "Can't I leave it out here? Just for now? Then at lunch I'll ask Rosie where she keeps hers."

He realized she would never amount to anything, never be able to earn her pay. If it had been up to him, he'd have told her so before any more time and money were wasted. But Mr. Lucian Olney—Mr. Sankey appreciated Mr. Lucian's desire for a pretty face; but why couldn't he put it where it belonged, in a cosy little back street, or perhaps over the river, instead of inflicting it, in all its helplessness, on Mr. Sankey?

"All right. Put it here on the window ledge for now. The drawing-in girls keep their coats by them, and I suppose Rosie can take care of yours, too. But see you take it up to her at noon. We can't have the stairs all cluttered up."

"But where is she?"

"On the fourth floor by the windows. Now listen. I'll have to start you at something easy, with the kids. This floor spins filler, and right outside there are the winders—wind the filler on bobbins. We just went by them. You're to take the——"

The door opened and a boy carrying a tray of bobbins came through it.

"Here, Sammy!"

"Hi, Mr. Sankey!"

"Come here. This here's Miss Kitty McCarran, she's starting today. You take her in hand and show her how to load the bobbins and take them up to the weave room. And no rough stuff, either. Just remember you had to learn this once yourself."

Sammy was a gangling youth, perhaps twelve years old, with lank hair, a pimply face, over-sized hands and feet, and a sly grin which he intended to be ingratiating. "Anything you say, Mr. Sankey. But——"

"No buts from you, kid. You do as you're told and take care of her."

"Yessir. Only—things are going good now, Mr. Sankey, and we don't exactly need another doffer girl."

"All right. You teach her, and if you make a good job of it perhaps we can kick you up a notch."

The urchin flushed. "Yessir. Now Miss, you wait here till I come back, then I'll show you." He scrambled up the steps with his tray of bobbins.

"You'll be all right now, Miss Kitty. Just do what Sammy tells you. But don't leave your coat here after noon-hour."

"Nosir," said Kitty, in unconscious imitation of Sammy. Mr. Sankey had turned to go when she said, "Please, is it all right if I wear shoes?"

He surveyed her with detached bewilderment, shifting his tobacco cud from one cheek to the other. He was used to them coming in green. But this one—— Good Lord, you'd think she'd never been in a mill before. "It's a free country. Wear anything you want. Barefoot or golden slippers, it's all the same to me, just so you work." He went back into the spinning-room, leaving her to wait alone for Sammy.

Other boys and girls clattered up and down the stairs before he returned. Most of them seemed about Sammy's age, although a few looked much younger. Perhaps they were merely undersized, runty. Sammy danced down the stairs with antics, making a monkey of himself, sticking out his elbows, wiggling his bottom, lifting his bare feet like a prancing horse, and trying to balance a tray of empty bobbins on his head. "Come on, Miss Kitty. Make a doffer girl out of you by tonight, or I'll bust trying!" He winked at her. "But no rough stuff, hear?"

Twelve hours later she dragged herself up the tenement stairs, leaning against Philip, who half carried her. Stairs—Blessed Mary—stairs! All day long, hour after hour, running up and down the stairs, carrying the heavy bobbin trays. Her back felt broken, her thighs ached, her shoes had rubbed raw places on her bare feet. The sudden cold, which had been an exquisite relief when she left the hot humid mill was now, but a few minutes later, an added pain. Her dress, wet with sweat, clung to her in a clammy cold sheet. She shivered. Her teeth began to chatter and she could not stop them. Philip picked her up and carried her. "Andrew, go ahead and get some blankets ready. She's got a chill."

Rosie said wearily, "No use pampering her, Philip. Make it just that much harder for her."

"Yeah? And suppose she catches pneumonia?"

"Why should she? We don't."

"We're used to it."

At the sight of Philip carrying Kitty, Mrs. McCarran rose from her chair by the window, her eyes wild. But when the lamplight flashed on Kitty's face, pale, smudged with dirt and oil, she saw that it was not her daughter. She sat down again to wait a little longer, leaving them to take care of their own troubles.

From the kitchen Andrew called, "Bring her in here, Philip! I'm warming a blanket."

Rosie said, "Oh, for God's sake! You'd think nobody ever had a chill before."

"You keep your damned mouth shut!" said Philip.

Andrew was holding a blanket before the stove, and Minerva, wearing her old velvet bonnet, was pouring boiling water into a dishpan. In a crisis Minerva always rose to the occasion. They bundled Kitty up, bathed her face with hot water, took off her shoes, exclaiming in pity over the wounds on her feet, and made her soak them in the dishpan. Minerva said, "Maybe we'd better move your cot in here so she can lie down, Philip. She looks terrible."

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," said Rosie, sinking wearily into a chair. "What is this, a hospital?"

"You'll be wishing it was, a few months from now."

"I'm all right," said Kitty, her teeth chattering. "I'll be warm in a minute."

"You ought to be ashamed, all of you." Minerva glared at them. "Look at her feet! Couldn't you find any rags?"

"Can't run up and down stairs all day with rags on your feet," said Andrew. "What have we got to eat?"

"Turkey bones. Mrs. McCarran calls it stew. What have they got you doing over there anyhow, Kitty?"

Andrew answered for her. "Doffer girl."

Philip poured a cup of tea and brought it to Kitty. He sat beside her while she drank it. "You can't go back there, Kitty. I won't have you——"

She thought of Lucian Olney. "I have to earn my living, Philip."

"You can find something else to do."

"Oh sure," said Rosie with heavy sarcasm. "Let's all find something else to do."

Minerva ladled out a bowl of stew for Kitty. "Frankly, I agree with Mr. Rubashevski. He says it'll be over his dead body his daughter goes to work in a mill."

"Isn't that just lovely," said Rosie. "But I suppose it's all right for her to peddle bananas in the streets. Andrew, get me some stew, will you?"

"It is not!" snapped Minerva. "I'll have you know Mr. Rubashevski is a very well-educated gentleman."

"Since when? Last I heard he was just a Pearl Street kike."

"Don't you dare call him a kike, Rosie Donovan! Just because a man has the misfortune to be born a——"

Bridie McCarran shuffled into the room. "Is the stew all right, children? You know, I've been thinking if I speak to Mr. O'Hearn maybe he can get Kitty a nice place in service. Seems a pity when you have influence with somebody and know him real well like I——"

Philip leaned over Kitty. "You have to eat. You're hungry, even if you are too tired to know it. Are you warm enough now?"

She nodded. "I'm so sleepy, I——"

He took the bowl of stew and fed it to her, spoonful by spoonful. Nobody else paid attention to them. Mrs. McCarran maundered on about her influence with Mr. O'Hearn. Minerva nursed her resentment over Rosie's insults to Mr. Rubashevski. Andrew and Rosie ate.

When Kitty finished the stew Philip picked her up and carried her into Minerva's room. He tucked her into the bed, leaving the extra blanket around her. "Good night, now. You sure you're warm enough?"

"'Tis funny. All day I was after fainting from that awful heat and now——. Philip, are mills always like that?"

"Yes. A good many are worse."

"So hot—— I never knew a place could be so——"

For a while, as she slept, he knelt beside the bed. He put his head down on the pillow beside hers, his cheek close to hers. And in the darkness, with a sort of stifled rage, he thought about her and about the mill. He felt ensnared, trapped. They were all trapped. What was the matter with all of them? Why didn't they all, like himself, feel this strangling desperation?

Minerva called him. "What are you doing in there, Philip? It's not decent to——"

He kissed Kitty lightly, his lips lingering against her cheek, her mouth, her eyelids, on which he could taste the salt of that day's tears.

Then he decently went into the kitchen and consumed two bowls of stew.

## II

After that she worked barefoot like the rest of the doffers.

In order to bear her manifold pains and her accumulating weariness, she put her mind to sleep while her body performed its monotonous cycle of duties. Full bobbins up the stairs, put them in the basket on the loom, take the empty bobbins down the stairs. Full bobbins up the stairs, empty bobbins down the stairs, full bobbins—on and on, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, her mind in a stupor, her body hypnotized on its treadmill of dreadful motion. She would not think ahead to the mid-morning rest period, to dinner, to the end of another day, for to think of time made it stand still. She would not think of the noise, for that was to hear it, nor of the heat, for that was to feel it. She would not think of the past, for that was to remember hope and ambition. Nor would she think about the fat greasy Portuguese weaver who was always trying to touch her. He patted her buttocks, her shoulder, any part of her he could reach. He leered at her and made suggestive gestures. His intentions toward her carried plainly above the racket of the weave room, across the barrier of language. Above all, she would not think about the future, about what would become of her if she had to work in this place for the rest of her life.

She forgot what day it was, what hour of the day. To her sleeping mind events identified the days, but not the passage of them. There

was the day the two spinning women got into a fight, and one pushed the other against a steam vent and held her there until she collapsed from the agony of her burns, and no one heard her screams above the racket of the mill. There was the day Sammy was promoted to mixing starch for the slasher, and he told her when he got his pay he'd take her out and buy her a beer. There was the day a weaver with the knotting sickness began to cough and couldn't stop until he'd coughed himself to death. Even after he was dead the blood gushed from his mouth on to the oil-soaked floor.

There was the day when she was in the weaverroom when the machines stopped for the dinner hour. As the whirring died and the belts flapped slowly into quietness, the wife of one of the weavers entered the room, walking heavily, for she was in the last days of pregnancy. She was Portuguese, big, swarthy; her face under her black shawl still retained vestiges of the beauty she had possessed in girlhood. She walked stolidly between the rows of looms, carrying her husband's dinner pail. Kitty's Portuguese weaver was bending over to tie a thread, his rump sticking out. The clumsy woman bumped into him, causing him to lose the thread. Without warning he turned and struck her such a blow in the face that she fell backward upon the floor, for a moment so still that Kitty thought she had been knocked unconscious. The weaver turned back to his work, not even looking to see where she had fallen.

Kitty was momentarily shaken from her stupor, and she moved a step forward to help the woman, but Andrew had come up, and he said, "Don't interfere, Kitty. People that want to live don't mix in with Portuguese fights."

"But Andrew! To hit a woman! She wasn't after bumping him."

The woman groaned, stirred, clutched the side of the loom and pulled herself to her feet. Like vindictive coals her black eyes burned as she stared at the weaver, who had moved two looms forward and was bending over another knot. The belts overhead were still now, the looms were still. A frantic, vengeful silence hung over the room. Then the woman tore the shuttle from the web of threads on the loom beside her, and with a wide magnificent gesture, she threw it at the weaver. It hit him on the forehead, and before it fell it gashed his cheek open from eye to chin. The woman picked up what she could salvage of her husband's dinner and proceeded on her way with it.

Andrew said, "Come on. Let's go find Rosie."

In sick fascination, Kitty stared at the fallen weaver, at his glistening

cheekbone shining through the gaping red flesh. Andrew pulled her away.

She whimpered, "Never in my life did I see such things! Never—I—it makes me sick, Andrew!"

"You'll have to get used to it, Kitty. Just mind your own business so you don't get hurt yourself."

The day after that was memorable because everyone was paid. She felt a thrill of hope as she took her little envelope. In it lay the first step toward freedom. She held it a long time before she opened it. There was one dollar and eighty cents in it. Sixty hours she had worked, at three cents an hour.

To comfort herself she began to dream: she would meet Lucian Olney in the town, and he'd take her to tea. He'd discover she was really a lady, and he'd marry her and they'd live on the Hill with the other rich people. She would take her proper place in society. She dreamed of the wardrobe she would buy, of the carriage she would drive, of the kind things she would do for the Hawkes family. Perhaps she would even finance the boys' invention, not because it would ever amount to anything, but because when she was rich she'd have an obligation to do things like that. As her misery and weariness grew deeper, her dreams became more elaborate. She constructed fairylike scenes, complex plots, and her mind repeated word for word imaginary dialogues between herself and Lucian, as in a play. She had no brogue in the dreams. She planned the clothes for the dreams with the greatest care, down to the last button and frill. And the houses: all the furniture, the lawns and gardens, the servants, and the guests at the balls she and Lucian gave. She and Lucian even progressed in time in the dreams, growing old in mellow wealth, surrounded by children and grandchildren.

She should have been planning, not dreaming, and she knew it. But she was too bone weary, too stupefied by the trap in which she was caught, to plan. She did not even try to make her dreams meeting with Lucian logical: they always met by accident, as a favour of fate. Because that was how it would have to be, if it ever happened. She understood now that she could work here the rest of her life and never catch more than glimpses of him, shadow glimpses, through the years. In Ireland a master knew his hands, a lord his servants. But here— On the rare occasions when despair engulfed her so deeply that she abandoned even her dreams, her mind fought bitterly, with futile bitterness, against the barriers this cruel ungracious society placed between herself and Lucian. Then she would think that it was all a lie, the tales she'd



been told of equality in America, of everyone having a chance, of no one holding your origins against you. She doubted, on one such moment of rational despair, that a mill owner had ever married a mill worker, and she asked Aunt Bridie about it.

The old woman was profoundly shocked. "Are you out of your mind, dearie? Just give it a little thought now. Would it be fitting for one like Mr. Barnabas—supposing he wasn't a heathen—to marry the likes of me? 'Twould make the both of us the laughing stock of the universe. Really now, Kitty. They've their place, and we have ours. And there's no use frashing yourself over it."

"But everyone says in America it's different."

"Well, it ain't. There's high and low all over the world, and that's as it should be, seeing it's the will of the Lord."

Kitty went back to dreaming of the happy accident: herself in a red velvet dress, walking down Main Street, and Lucian on a horse. On and on, through the stupor of weariness, through the eternal shattering noise, through the steaming heat, through the filth and violence, her sleeping mind spun its web of dreams.

## PART TWO

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### Lucian

Lucian spent three evenings each week in the drawing-room of the Pugh mansion. It was the most grandiose drawing-room in town. It abounded in statuary and gigantic ferns on walnut pedestals, in Turkish rugs laid over red carpeting, in gold-framed paintings of Venice, of grazing sheep and cows, of ruined castles. The furniture was heavy Victorian, bought in the 'seventies when Grace Donny had married Ezra Pugh and moved to Fall River. In other rooms of the house, hidden away, there was a scattering of older, more modest pieces brought from her home in New Bedford, where her father had made a fortune in menhaden and cod. When he died, leaving everything to her, Ezra Pugh had liquidated this malodorous fish business and put the money, decently, into cotton mills.

Where Ezra had made his money and exactly where he had come from and what his family had been like, nobody knew for certain. They were not, therefore, what Lucian's mother, Amy Olney, called "really nice people". One could not ignore them, however—they were so tremendously rich, and Pugh was on the boards of half the mills and banks in town: though not, curiously, on the board of the Olney mills. Barnabas Olney neither liked nor trusted Pugh. When Lucian had informed his father that he intended to marry Adelaide, Barnabas had said, "You don't love the girl."

"But she adores me, which is more to the point, Father. And I'm quite fond of her. I imagine once she's pried loose from Mommer and Popper, she'll blossom out."

"She's very sensitive and childlike, Lucian," Barnabas had said. "Such women can make—er—difficult wives." Barnabas knew, for he was married to such a woman.

Lucian had shrugged. "I doubt it. After all, they leave a man alone, and that's the main thing. I couldn't stand a wife who was always asking questions, poking into my affairs. There's nothing so ghastly as these unfeminine women who're always sounding off with opinions,

butting into conversations. Charging around like Cousin Silence Bess. No, thanks, Father. I'll take Adelaide any day."

"One might strike a happy medium," Barnabas had suggested mildly.

"Not around here. It's a pity, though, that New England women don't run more to looks."

"Your mother was a very pretty girl."

"Still is. Soft and coo-ey and timid, like a little domesticated dove. Adelaide'll never be pretty, of course. But she has all the other virtues. I dare say I'll make her a good husband."

"That you will, Lucian," Barnabas had said drily. It was really a mild threat, although Lucian did not recognize it as such. Barnabas liked Adelaide, and he felt sorry for her. He had nothing against Grace Pugh either, although he thought her efforts to build up the Pughs by means of the Donny genealogy were a little funny.

Grace Pugh was large, like a dray horse. Mrs. Riggs, who was philosophically convinced that one must make do with the material at hand, let herself go in the matter of braid, feathers, fringes, and bold lace when dressing Mrs. Pugh. "With your figure you can carry it," Mrs. Riggs would say, firmly basting on another row of fringe. The result was frequently unfortunate: more often than not Mrs. Pugh suggested an overloaded barge ploughing through heavy seas. Tonight she wore purple velvet trimmed with gros point lace. Diamonds flashed on her hands as she peered over her deep bosom at the pillow case she was embroidering for Adelaide's trousseau.

Ezra Pugh, a big man with a red face, was trying to read the evening paper. He sat in the gentleman's chair by the fireplace, somewhat apart from the others.

Mrs. Pugh was saying, "She's been moping about it all day, Lucian. And she knows perfectly well that if her father says she can't, she can't. Though I for one——" Mrs. Pugh looked accusingly across the room at Mr. Pugh, "—fail to see *why* she can't."

Mr. Pugh let his paper drop. "If you're talking about that glove-factory girl again, I've said my last word on the subject, and that's final."

Adelaide's sallow skin turned pink, as it always did when she was frightened or humiliated. The blush, when it faded, would leave mottled blotches on her cheeks.

Mrs. Pugh said, "Of course, dear, but it does seem so unreasonable—a girl not being able to have her best friend for a bridesmaid simply because——"

Mr. Pugh set his paper down firmly. "There's no point in cultivating those people, Grace. They're not going to last."

"But they've lasted twenty years, Ezra, and I understand they're expanding. And it'll look so odd, when Dacey and Adelaide have been as thick as thieves for years. People will say——"

"I don't give a *damn* what people say! To be one of Adelaide's attendants is an honour I'll not allow you to confer on every Tom, Dick, and Harry. Gloves! What kind of business is that? This is a mill town, and we've got to keep it that way."

"But they're certainly doing well, Ezra. And Dacey is *quite* presentable."

Lucian said, "Really, sir, aren't you being a little hard on her just because her father happens to be in the wrong business?"

"It's the principle of the thing," growled Mr. Pugh. "But since it was your father sold them land when no one else would, I don't wonder you can't see it, Lucian. I won't mince words. As long as that glove factory's here we're going to have labour troubles. Since the day they opened they've fomented discontent among the workers. Why, do you realize some of their glove cutters make fourteen dollars a week? Think of it! Fourteen dollars! Barnabas Olney was out of his mind the day he signed over a good mill site to those—those——"

"But what's it to do with Dacey, sir? She's a nice girl, and if Adelaide wants her——"

"The sooner Adelaide realizes she can't have everything she wants, the better. Right-thinking people have a responsibility to this town, to keep it solid. Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile. Besides, it's time enough to start cultivating them when they've managed to buy a house at the Harbor."

"But, Ezra," said Mrs. Pugh, "they don't want a house at the Harbor. They go to Europe every summer, and the other brother has a house in Newport."

"Don't be so easily taken in, Grace. They naturally have to go some place, since they can't go to the Harbor. Gloves!"

The insularity which caused Ezra Pugh to regard Westport Harbor as analogous to the inner circle of heaven amused Lucian, although, secretly, he felt much the same way. Pugh had had a rather rough time getting a summer place there himself, and he had succeeded finally not by purchase, but by sharp dealing of which the final outcome had been to drive old Salvation Bess (a great uncle of Lucian's) into bankruptcy. In the resulting foreclosure and liquidation he'd held on to all the Bess property he found useful, including the farm at the Harbor.

Lucian rather admired Pugh for this than otherwise. The money would never have come to Lucian in any case. If old Salvation hadn't lost it, it would have gone to his daughter Silence, who'd have wasted it on the Votes-for-Women Crusade.

Lucian said smoothly, "You're right, sir. If they pay such wages they can't be very solid. It's a pity they do all their banking in Boston and New York—makes it hard to manœuvre them into a bad position when business goes sour."

Mr. Pugh let out a startled grunt. He picked up his paper and smoothed it thoughtfully on his knee. "Well, I've said all I'm going to say about it." But his tone carried so little conviction that Grace and Adelaide smiled happily at Lucian, and Adelaide even went so far as to squeeze his hand.

The insupportable evening wore on. The maid served sherry to the gentlemen and madeira to the ladies. Adelaide, after long persuasion (it verged on nagging) from Mrs. Pugh, recited some of her poems. Among them was one which began,

"Found dead! dead and alone!  
There was nobody near, nobody near  
When the Outcast died on his pillow of stone—  
No mother, no brother, no sister dear——"

that Lucian considered the lowest depths to which Adelaide's expression teacher had yet sunk. But they were all on that order. He could not imagine in what literary graveyard the woman dug up these interminable dark tracts in rhyme, but he had a dismal vision of young ladies sitting in drawing-rooms all over the country reciting this edifying gloom to their swains. It could hardly be otherwise: expression lessons were so fashionable as to be obligatory. Lucian did not object to Adelaide's recitations on literary grounds, because they were bad poetry. He was not an educated man and he would have been horrified if anyone suggested that he was. He had always sedulously avoided learning anything, in so far as such a course was compatible with squeaking through school; and he had not, of course, gone to college. He objected to Adelaide's recitations because they were dowdy. He fancied himself as a Beau Brummell, a man of the world, a sophisticate who had tasted the heady wines of Europe; and who, if he had not exactly wallowed in the fleshpots of that sink of iniquity, had at least glimpsed them. Adelaide's effusions were the summing-up of all that he found stodgy and obnoxious in his environment. To be forced to

participate in them, even passively, was a reminder that he might never escape; a reminder that few people ever did escape, unless they worked at it. And Lucian certainly had no plans to work at anything.

Finally Ezra, with whom a little art went a long way, seized upon a pause to draw Lucian into a discussion of the follies of Southern mill owners, who thought they could create a market by advertising and opening offices in New York, trick methods that were no substitute for good old New England know-how. Mr. Pugh gave the Southern mills five to ten years of life—no more, certainly, before bankruptcy enfolded them in its hungry hand. "You can't play fast and loose with mills and get away with it," he bellowed.

Then Mrs. Pugh suggested Adelaide play a little music for them, which she did. And Lucian sang a few songs. Then it was ten o'clock, thank God, and the evening was over.

He drove straight to his favourite house of prostitution, just over the State line in Tiverton. But, although he mildly enjoyed himself, more by virtue of the contrast with the earlier hours of the evening than by any merit in the entertainment, he knew it was merely a make-shift. He really wanted Kitty McCarran. He didn't know how to get her, since, speaking figuratively, he was the Brahmin and she was the Untouchable; although it was possible she might come to him when she grew desperate, discouraged, and tired enough. Anyhow, there would be a way. There always was for Lucian. He was quite sincerely convinced that as the Dauphin had been to France, so was Lucian Olney to Fall River. He was pleasant about it, even disarmingly modest; but he held to the conviction firmly.

2

About a month after Lucian hired her, Kitty was hurt. During the dinner hour, her Portuguese weaver, who now wore an angry scar to remind him of his previous violence, followed her on to the stairway, where he seized her and slobbered kisses over her face. She fought against him, kicking, screaming. People in the weaverroom heard the noise and came running, which frightened the man. He pushed Kitty away so roughly that she fell down the stairs, hitting her head against an iron tread, spraining her ankle, and breaking her collar bone.

The weavers improvised a stretcher from cloth, and Andrew and Mr. Sankey carried her to Barnabas Olney's office. Since the big fire it had been standard practice at the Olney mills to give immediate

medical care to anyone who was hurt. It was this sort of pampering of the hands which made Ezra Pugh so deeply suspicious of Barnabas Olney.

Barnabas stared down at the unconscious girl in pity. To him the workers were not "hands", anonymous adjuncts to the machines, but "help" in the old-fashioned Yankee sense of the word. Each was a person, an individual, who literally helped Barnabas to run a cotton mill. The system had outgrown his point of view; he could no longer know all those who worked for him, nor could he run his mill too differently from other mill owners. The wages he paid were standard and, in his opinion, just. A good man would rise to higher levels; a careless improvident man would sink to the pauperism he deserved. Barnabas's father had gone to work at the age of ten as a doffer boy, working fourteen hours a day for seventy-five cents a week. At forty, he had owned this mill. Barnabas saw no reason why every other man should not do likewise.

But he pitied the women. They worked for wages only. He wished there were a way to run a mill without the aid of women and children. No matter what their wages, he felt that nothing could ever compensate them for the loss of innocence.

When he'd heard the story of how Kitty had been hurt, Barnabas ordered Mr. Sankey to dismiss the weaver. "These wild men must learn there is no place for violence in a mill."

Andrew was about to follow Mr. Sankey out, for the dinner hour was now over, but Barnabas stopped him. "Andrew, I hear that you and Philip are working on mill inventions."

Andrew was instantly on guard. He and Philip made it a practice never to discuss the inventions with anyone at the mill. The workers would mock them for such useless striving; and they'd heard too many stories of inventions being stolen. Tim McCarran had been working on a way to make the combers better, but he'd talked too much over his beer—the Irish could never keep their big mouths shut. And first thing you knew, someone else had the patents and the money, and Tim McCarran was coughing his lungs out from the lint of the old combers.

"It's nothing, sir. We have an idea now and then, but——"

"I met Mrs. McCarran the other day when she was bringing her dinners for her dead girls, poor thing. She talked of it, and I thought perhaps——"

"She really doesn't understand, sir. She likes to dream of the day we'll all be rich."

"Ah yes. Well—should anything come of it, bring it to me before you show it elsewhere. I may be able to help with the patents and to see that you and Philip are not defrauded."

Andrew felt ashamed of himself. If Barnabas Olney said this, he meant it. He was an upright Quaker, shrewd in trade but rigorously honest. He'd never been known to cheat any man of a penny. "Thank you, sir. That's kind of you."

Barnabas smiled. In repose his face was austere—the Emperor of the coin come to maturity and responsibility. But he smiled youthfully, with candour, and one perceived that he liked and respected other men. "No, it's a small thing. Too small to repay the years of service and loyalty you and your parents have given me and my father. Besides, it is good business to encourage new things. I'm glad you're doing this, Andrew, but be careful. Every invention puts some men out of work, and they'll hate you for that. They'll force you from your camp into ours, and we don't sleep on rose petals either."

This revelation of his employer's doubts embarrassed Andrew. It was a confidence, an intimacy, and as such it sought to make him feel beholden to that other world of wealth, security, and power to which Andrew did not want to feel indebted. "Yes, sir. I'll tell Philip."

The time was not right to speak to Philip about anything, however. He worked in Number 5 Mill, where fine cloth was made, and therefore he knew nothing of Kitty's accident until he got home to find the tenement in a turmoil.

Minerva, dressed in her best clothes and the new hat, was standing by the kitchen sink swallowing a cup of tea. She was saying, "The question of how we'll pay for it is irrelevant, Andrew. The child has to have a bed for herself. In a time of crisis it is inhuman and quite beside the point to quibble over a few dollars."

"I'm not quibbling, Aunt Minerva. I just want to point out that we haven't got the few dollars."

"It is irrelevant. Mr. Rubashevski will——"

"You getting all that fancy language from that dirty Jew?" asked Rosie.

"I'm not aware I'm speaking Yiddish, Rosie. And it is barely possible that Mr. Rubashevski is cleaner than you are."

Mrs. McCarran said, "Rosie, you apologize to Miss Hawkes. 'Tis a wicked shame the way the nice girls get spoiled when they go out to work. And Miss Hawkes is right. With the child at death's door and all her pretty bones broken, 'tis sure we can't let her——"

Philip, standing in the doorway said, "Where's Kitty?"



They turned to stare at him, arrested in their motions: Minerva in all her finery with the teacup raised to her lips; Rosie with a spoonful of oatmeal in her hand; Andrew, his hand reached out to take a bowl of porridge from Mrs. McCarran, who stood beside the stove. Over them all, in their momentary stillness, the kerosene lamp cast its peculiarly ghastly yellow light, revealing their tired faces with dreary honesty.

Rosie said, "She had a little accident, Philip."

Mrs. McCarran moaned, "Och, 'tis all her bones are broken, and percussion as well, my dear boy. A mercy she can breathe——"

"*Concussion*," said Minerva in the special tone of exhausted patience that Mrs. McCarran often evoked from her. "Now, Philip, she's going to be all right. The doctor said——"

"Where is she?"

"Asleep in my bed. You're not to disturb her either."

Philip went into the bedroom and stood at the foot of the bed, looking through the darkness at the dim, sleeping form of Kitty McCarran. Minerva followed him. "Come now, Philip. There is much to be done, and we can't waste time. We'll have to go to Mr. Ruba——"

"No. I'm going to stay here till she wakes up."

"That may be hours. The doctor gave her something to make her sleep. Philip, there's no use your getting excited——"

"Oh, for God's sake! Excited! She's hurt, isn't she?"

Minerva looked at him sharply, sizing up the situation; then she turned abruptly and left the room.

Philip's love was a pain and a struggle. He did not want to love anyone: he had no time for it. Before meeting Kitty he had thought vaguely that he would some day marry a woman who would be a good housekeeper, a good companion, a good mother. She would also be handsome, intelligent, and understanding. Yet, with all these virtues, he had never thought of her as being irresistible to him. It would be necessary only that he like and admire her. Beyond this he did not care to commit himself, for love was a seizure of the soul, a slavery.

Now he loved, unwillingly. It did not matter that Kitty had few, or none, of the virtues with which he had endowed his ideal wife. He suspected that if Kitty ever married him, his life would in time become a hell but rarely streaked with bliss. And she did not love him: his bondage was one-sided. But perhaps some day she would pretend to love him, if only out of desperation, surrender in desperation. He

would accept, if those were the terms. "These things," he thought, "are arranged elsewhere, beyond us. We are being pushed."

As he had done once before, he knelt beside the bed, laying his head on Kitty's pillow, his fingers tangled gently in her spreading hair. Perhaps some day he would marry her and there would be a greater pleasure or a greater pain. Perhaps. The only certainty was now. If this was the closest he might ever come to possession of her, then this moment must be made to hold forever the total meaning of possession.

3

Kitty's accident gave Lucian his opportunity. He called on her on a Sunday afternoon when he supposed the whole family would be home. He brought fruit and flowers, letting it be understood that these were a gift of the management, like the Christmas baskets. Kitty, with her shoulder in a cast and her ankle taped, was sitting in an armchair that had been moved into the kitchen for her. Aside from asking how she was and saying goodbye to her when he left, Lucian addressed no remarks to her directly. He exerted himself to charm the rest of the family. Philip and Andrew were not impressed.

"Nothing high flown about him," said Rosie during the post-mortem.

"True gentlemen are never high flown," said Mrs. McCarran, washing up the teacups. "Nice we have a Beleek pitcher for the milk now, ain't it? That Miss Pugh is a lucky one to get him, and her as homely as one of God's mistakes."

A choking lump rose in Kitty's throat. "Who's Miss Pugh?"

"Why, his fi-ancy, dearie. Sure everybody knows that. Mr. O'Hearn was telling me they're to go to Europe on their honeymoon."

"All the girls at the mill say he's marrying her for her money," said Rosie. "Because she sure hasn't anything else."

"Och, what a thing to say, Rosie! And why should he do that when he's so fabulous rich himself? And you don't know the young lady. Belike she has a good heart, which is better than corrynets."

"Gramma, if all you can say about a girl is that she has a good heart, you might as well keep quiet."

Minerva said, "Can't stand the man. Never could. But I don't mind eating one of his apples if you'll hand it over."

Lucian called again on Tuesday afternoon, when only Kitty and Mrs. McCarran were home. He brought candy, drank tea with them,

and told funny stories about high society in Newport which made Mrs. McCarran laugh until she cried, although she reproved him for his disrespect. But the implication was that high society was no better than it should be, and that Lucian really enjoyed the company of the lowly. Mrs. McCarran found this very flattering. Far wiser women than she had been taken in by Lucian. "Och, ain't he grand and pleasant, though?" she said after he'd left.

"Um. He's very nice," said Kitty, unable to look the old woman in the eye honestly.

When Philip discovered that Lucian had come again he was furious. "Why doesn't he stay where he belongs? We want no truck with him or any of his kind!"

Mrs. McCarran was shocked. "He's no more than doing his duty now. 'Tis his father sends him, for he says so himself. And that's only right."

"His father sends him! Do you have to be so simple?"

"I'll have none of your lip, young man," said Bridie with surprising spirit. "It does no harm to either high or low to mix and mingle, provided all remember their proper places and keep to them with due respect for each other."

Philip said to Kitty, "Don't take any more of his damned presents, you hear?"

"I'll do as I please," said Kitty coldly.

Then Lucian began to call during the dinner hour when Mrs. McCarran went to the mill with the lunches for her dead daughters. He gave her the excuse, which she readily accepted, that Kitty should not be left alone. He went to all this trouble to court a woman he considered low because he regarded Kitty, in a sense, as property. He was dickering for her as he might have done for a block of slum tenements.

She was the only authentic Beauty he had seen, and he lived in an age when a man of the world, in order to deserve the name, must keep a Beauty. In the world toward which Lucian yearned, to which he wanted to become accustomed, the Beauty was as indispensable as the right tailor or the smart equipage. She was the orchid that symbolized and sublimated the jungle, and for a man to lose his Beauty was a more shameful defeat than to lose a railroad. Since she went always to him who had the most gold, only men with steady nerves and a flair for gambling could stand the strain of her possession. It was this streak of knight errantry, this constant risk running through the situation, that prevented many bachelors from marrying their Beauties. It was a

relationship whose essence, on both sides, was insecurity. The Beauty was the necessary and living symbol of what the sour Dr. Veblen was even then calling "conspicuous waste". It never crossed Lucian's mind that Kitty might not desire this rôle. She was rather obviously making a play for him. That could only mean, he thought, that she wanted to become Fall River's best-kept courtesan.

Yet the spectres of his righteous ancestors haunted him, and the stratification of the local society caused him trouble. He was constrained to proceed with caution. Fall River was not New York, nor even Boston. There must be no mess, no embarrassment, no pressure put upon him from any direction. Particularly not from the direction of his father or the Pughs.

What he overlooked was that in Kitty he was dealing with an amateur: one who did not even know the rules of this dangerous and delightful game. She seldom spoke during his visits. She let him hold forth in long monologues about New York, Paris, London, and how smart women dressed in Europe, and she listened with an expression of trusting admiration. He found this exhilarating, but seeing so much of her was a physical strain. He spent more and more time in the brothel at Tiverton. This medicine merely aggravated the disease, however: he was but twenty-two, and gifted with considerable virility.

One day, after the cast on her shoulder had been removed, he noticed that she had been crying. "What's the matter, Kitty? You should be happy, now that you're almost well."

"Oh, Mr. Lucian! I don't know what'll happen to me, truly I don't! I can't go back into that awful mill! I can't!"

He took her in his arms, gently wiping away her tears. "You don't have to. Never, if you don't want to."

"But what else is there for me, and me with no money at all?" She buried her face against his shoulder, sobbing. There was nothing to do but hold her tighter, kiss her, and tell her that he loved her, that he'd always take care of her, that he wanted nothing on earth except to love her and take care of her.

She knew what she was about, however. "It's not proper for you nor me to speak of love, Mr. Olney, and you with a fi-ancy."

"Adelaide! Good God, Kitty, have you ever seen her?"

"That I haven't. But looks aside, it's certain you can't marry the both of us."

Fortunately he was spared answering, for Bridie McCarran dragged up the back stairs, puffing and gasping. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

them stairs! I hope I didn't keep you waiting, Mr. Lucian, but what with one thing and another, I just seemed to miss my girls all along the way, and it took me longer than I figured on. Now, how about a nice hot cup of tea?"

"Thank you, Mrs. McCarran, I don't mind if I do," said Lucian easily, adopting the vernacular to serve his purpose.

He did not call again for several days. Kitty waited, eating her heart out with worry. Sometimes she let her mending fall into her lap and sat staring at the brown tenement walls, seeing not them but the black desolation of the future, the barren years treading into eternity upon each other's heels like a long grim queue of funeral mimes, and herself an old maid, having driven away the one great love of her life with her plain immodest speaking. "'Tis the convent for me," she thought.

In a glow of romantic sorrow she saw herself as a black-clad Benedictine teaching little children with sweet patience; as a White Dominican nursing the tormented dying; as a brown Carmelite, barefoot, fasting, prostrating herself from dusk to dawn on the cold stones before the altar. This mental spectacle was very sad, although, of course, she would be doing the Lord's work.

Mrs. McCarran, who was cleaning the stove during one of these meditations, leaned back on her heels. "And what are you dreaming of, Kitty darling?"

"I—tell me, Aunt Bridie, did you ever think of taking the veil, now?"

"Och, dearie, have you gone clean out of your mind? Me a nun? An ignorant, sinful old body like me?"

"I just thought perhaps sometime—oh, perhaps when you had a sorrow, you might have thought——"

Bridie chuckled softly. "I'm lucky to be telling you this, Kitty, but it's the truth, believe it or not. I've never had a sorrow like you mean, not a sorrow to suffer from, and sure there's not many in this world can say that. But Mrs. Laherty's two girls took the veil, poor things, and it like to kill her when she lost them, too. May God forgive me, Kitty, but I'd rather see my girls dead this minute than see them nuns."

"But nuns aren't poor things. 'Tis wonderful and romantic to be a nun."

"And break your poor mother's heart, like they broke Mrs. Laherty's? I remember she says to me, 'Bridie,' she says, 'tis a terrible thing to die to the world, and better I never bore them than I should live to see this day!'"

"Sure, but they might really have died. Wouldn't that be worse?"

"No, 'twouldn't. For at least then Mrs. Laherty would of had the comfort of a good wake and the pleasure and duty to pray them out of purgatory."

"Aunt Bridie, do you think Mr. Lucian came to see me because he's kind? Only that?"

"That I do, Kitty. Like father, like son. 'Tis a pity Mr. Barnabas is an unredeemed heretic, with no hope to cure him of it, may God have mercy on him, because a kinder man never drew breath on this earth."

"Oh? I thought—well, likely he was a hard man."

"Mr. Barnabas hard? Och, never! Benighted he is, and to my mind he never was the fine elegant figure of a gentleman that Mr. Lucian is, not that he wasn't handsome, too, in his day."

"When is Mr. Lucian going to marry Miss Pugh?"

"June, belike, or so Miss Hawkes says, according to Mrs. Riggs. A pity it is that Mr. O'Hearn doesn't drop by like he promised, for being he's in the inner circle there's a deal he could tell us, if he would, now." She dabbed blacking on the stove pensively. "May God forgive me for saying it, Kitty, but there's times I think Pat O'Hearn's got above himself, being in society and all like he is. Still if anyone's to blame, 'tis no doubt that wife of his—she was always too big for her shoes." And Mrs. McCarran launched into long rambling tales of the old days, of society, and the virtues and vices of people Kitty had never heard of. Kitty went back to her dreams, trying to evade her problems.

The next time Lucian called, it was to tell her that he'd arranged a job in the cloth room for her. These jobs were highly prized by the mill women, but Kitty was not properly grateful, for she didn't know what a cloth room was nor that Rosie would have given a good bit for such ladylike work. "Sure that's very kind of you, sir," she said coolly.

"You'll make four dollars a week after you learn the work. It's clean and quiet, and you can sit down." Still Kitty showed no enthusiasm. "You don't seem very happy about it, Kitty."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Lucian. Truly the money will be a big help, and me trying to save enough to get back to New York."

"Oh, no, Kitty! You can't leave here now—not just when——"

She looked at him squarely. "There's nothing here for me, Mr. Lucian. And the truth is, I can't abide the mills."

He heard Mrs. McCarran's step on the stairs, and he said quickly, "Come for a drive with me, Kitty. The air will do you good. I'll run around to Kirby's and hire a hack while you're getting ready."

Mrs. McCarran was so delighted that Kitty had a chance to go out,

and so certain that Mr. Lucian was only taking her out of the kindness of his heart, that it never occurred to her to ask to go along as chaperone.

Lucian made great progress that afternoon. He forgot his uneasiness that some one might see them and report to the Pughs. He even forgot that the affair was moving forward faster than was desirable. On the whole, it was perhaps just as well that buggies were not designed for the consummation of passion.

4

Kitty quickly learned her work in the cloth room, for her eyes were keen and her hands deft. By the time she had been at it a month, very little flawed cloth was slipping past her. The foreman praised her, Mrs. McCarran bragged about how smart she was, Rosie envied her the soft job, saying she never would have got it if she hadn't been hurt and played on the sympathies of the Olneys, and Minerva grudgingly conceded that if you had to work in a mill it might as well be in the cloth room. Andrew was sincerely glad that she was doing so well.

Only Philip had nothing to say about the change. Apparently he alone was aware that the cloth room was at the foot of the stairs leading to the offices.

Kitty avoided Philip as much as she could. But one evening, when she had gone out to the store, he cornered her in the backyard. "Why are you behaving this way to me, Kitty?"

"Please now, Philip! Aunt Bridie's waiting for the yeast." She tried to duck past him.

He blocked her way. "What have I done, except to love you? You won't look at me or talk to me—or even walk across the street to the mill with me."

"Please, Philip. It's sinful even to talk about it."

"Kitty, I can't go on living in the same house with you, not with this thing between us. Do you have to behave as if you hated me?"

"I don't hate you. I——"

"Yes!"

"Oh, if you must have it, then—I—I'm afraid of you."

"But that's absurd! I have no thought about you that isn't gentle. Why, I *love* you, Kitty! I——"

"You're a wild violent man, Philip. 'Tis a black way you have of talking against everything, and any woman that takes you, you'll drag her down to destruction. You're just like my father, the both of you

cut from the same piece of cloth. Gentle! Sure you don't know the meaning of the word. You can't see anything but you want to tear it to pieces and destroy it."

"Are you talking about *me*, Kitty McCarran? Because you've got it all backwards. I want to make things, not destroy them. Can't you get that through your head?"

"There's enough things made already. Only the devil wants to change everything. Now will you let me go for the yeast?"

"Wait a minute. If you know so much about the devil, why aren't you afraid of Lucian Olney?"

"And why should I be, when he's a gentleman and he's done me nothing but kindness?"

"Do you love him?"

She flushed. "You think I don't know my place better than that?"

"To hell with your place! Do you love him, or what he stands for—money and an easy life and a grand manner?"

"I'm not beholden to answer you, Philip. Now I'll be going."

"Believe me, Kitty, you're afraid of the wrong man."

He worked out the rest of the week at the mill. Then he packed his few belongings, most of which were drawings of machinery, and he left the house to go to Lowell. Within the week he wrote Andrew that he'd got a job in a mill machine factory there. From time to time he sent them money, for his wages were twice what they'd been at the cotton mill. None of them held resentment against him for leaving. It seemed right that Philip should try to better himself. Andrew and Minerva missed him profoundly; but Rosie, drawing near the end of her pregnancy, and Mrs. McCarran, intent upon her madness, soon forgot him.

With Philip gone there was no one to watch over the interests of Kitty McCarran. Minerva, who might have done so at another time, was now increasingly preoccupied with Mr. Rubashevski and his daughter. The others were not the noticing kind.

After Kitty went back to work it was almost impossible for Lucian to see her, for any undue notice he took of her would cause far too much unfavourable comment. He solved this problem by taking her, finally, to his father's summer house in Westport Harbor.



It was a great rambling place covered with weathered shingles. It had the deliberate dowdiness of most of the Harbor houses. It snuggled behind stunted pines, its lawn a field of windswept grass, its veranda vines an unpruned tangle. Each of its twenty rooms was furnished with cast-offs from the Fall River house and other family houses long since sold or rented to strangers. Discards from other eras: old maple settles, the Duncan Phyfe table that was too small for town dinner parties, small desks, old sewing baskets still containing bits of quaint calico, empire couches, mammoth bedsteads laced with rope and piled with feather beds, great mahogany bookcases filled with the debris of a dozen libraries, outmoded china and earthenware from broken sets, darned linens, faded hooked rugs, battered pewter, old Sandwich glass. Kitty thought the place was awful, and that it would be heaven for Minerva and Mr. Rubashevski.

The windows were boarded up. Lucian showed her through the house with the light of a kerosene lamp. It had an ill-trimmed wick which caused its light to flare up unexpectedly, and as unexpectedly to subside. These antics conferred a grotesque liveliness upon the hodge-podge of furnishings, making a pictured face start suddenly from the wall, a spindle-legged table seem suddenly to dance, a chair in a dustcover to throb as if it had a heart-beat, and the stairs to leap up abruptly like a wooden regiment on the march. Now and then the light grazed a boarded window, which then acted like a mirror to reflect the jumbled contents of the rooms, or Kitty and Lucian themselves, blurred in the dark glass like two ghosts carrying a lamp through a tomb of fetishes.

"Do you like it?"

"It's very grand," she answered politely.

He laughed. "But Newport's grander?"

She hesitated, not wanting to hurt his feelings. To Kitty no place on earth compared with Newport.

He teased her, enjoying her lowness, the vulgarity of her taste. "Would you rather have a house in Newport or this one?"

"I'd rather have whatever you want."

He pulled her down on a couch shrouded in a dust cover and made love to her. She wanted this. The very peril in which she placed herself gave each of his kisses an added burden of excitement. But she cried, "Oh no, Lucian! This is wrong—it is so wrong! What will become of me?"

With his lips against her throat, he murmured, "Don't worry about anything, Kitty. I'll always take care of you."

She believed him because she wanted to and she surrendered to him because she wanted to; and because, if she did not, there would be nothing ahead of her but a lifetime in the mills. She would become another Bridie, another Rosie. She knew now that she had been lucky to meet Lucian, or rather, lucky to have been able to force the meeting. Lucian's merely being there, on the periphery of her life, had been lucky. She could hardly have been more inexperienced in love. Yet she knew that she only had her body to give Lucian. If she gave it, he might grow bored with her and leave her. It was a chance she had to take, a desperately long chance. For certainly if she withheld it, he would marry Adelaide: he would hardly have an excuse not to. Her beauty was the only weapon she had against the world she lived in. And she knew obscurely that, however long the chance, she would be a fool if she did not use it.

She did not really think any of this as she submitted to Lucian. It was a knowledge within her, a background to action which had evolved slowly through her life. It was a wall she had built up, stone by stone, through the years of attrition. Now she hid behind it and fought: twenty was old, in her world, and she might not have another chance. Perhaps she would have behaved the same way with any other man who she thought could rescue her, even had he been far older and far less attractive than Lucian. The doubt never rose in her mind, for it was all too easy to love Lucian. She might have loved him even had he been poor. It was impossible to say, for by now ambition, desperation, and desire for him had become so inextricably tangled in her emotions and her thinking that she no longer knew where one ended and another began. And even while she lay in Lucian's arms, and her body seemed to dissolve under his caresses, she thought—it was a sort of prayer—"Oh, God will be good to me now—God will have to be good to me now."

She was an apt pupil in love; so apt that she rather shocked Lucian at first. His Puritan background warned him that she might be a little depraved, for all her virginity. But he finally decided that her amiability stemmed from innocence: she was too ignorant to know that in love, as in all other activities, there were taboos. Besides, he found the combination of innocence and lust, of *gaucherie* and depravity, exciting. She was much, much more amusing than any whore.

She had but one reticence: she was ashamed of nakedness. Therefore, when he discovered this, he took a special pleasure in keeping her naked as much as possible.

The spring came, Rosie grew clumsily big with her child, Andrew

was excited about some new invention he and Philip worked on by correspondence, and Minerva bought herself a new coat. No one understood where she had got the money for it. Every Sunday Kitty disappeared. The family assumed that she had a beau, but only old Bridie worried about it. She said to Kitty one day, "Why don't you bring him to the house, dearie?"

Kitty looked at her blankly. "Bring who?"

"Why, your boy, dearie. Some you might fool, but not me. 'Tis a thing or two I've seen in my time, and love has a way of showing, now. And does he work in the mill?"

Kitty flushed. "Yes, he does."

"'Tis fine he's no loafer. But be careful, Kitty. You've a fine job now with good money. So be sure you don't marry beneath yourself."

Even Kitty had to laugh at that. But in those days she was always close to laughter or to tears.

The weeks, each marked by a Sunday of love-making, drifted into months. Rosie's baby was born in May, and in the excitement attending its arrival no one noticed Kitty's comings and goings. Minerva appeared rigged out in a new navy blue suit cut in the most daring fashion with enormous leg o' mutton sleeves. She was behaving as if she were made of money, but she never took the pushcart out any more, and the house no longer filled up with junk. She'd grown very mysterious about Rubashevski. And it looked as if the new invention might really come off this time, though it was nothing but a little wheel or pulley for carding machines. With all this going on, no one noticed that Kitty looked wan and worried, nor that she was nervous and jumpy, often saying sharp ill-considered things like any of the rest of them.

Lucian's appetite for her seemed to increase with each furtive tryst, yet they were no closer to marriage than in the beginning. In an agony of worry she pressed him to take some action. Indeed, as she grew more frantic, her pressure verged on nagging, and this would have spoiled their times together had it not been for Lucian's expert fencing. He said he was trying to sell property but could find no buyers. He said he had stocks worth a lot of money, but just now they were depressed because Ezra Pugh was manipulating them to get control of the mills. It would be foolish to lose thousands of dollars because they were too impatient to wait a few weeks. She questioned him sharply about Adelaide, demanding that he break with her and no more shilly-shallying. Finally, to have peace, Lucian said he had done so, and there'd been an awful scene, and his father was furious.

"Then there's nothing to stop us now," she said.

"Nothing but money. My father won't give me a cent till he calms down. Of course, if I could sell the stock—we could go away until the scandal blew over. All we'd need would be about fifty thousand to see us through a year in Europe."

She had to believe him because she believed also in the myths of her age. They were repeated for her ad nauseam in every play, every book, and every old wives' tale. They were alive in the air, the social faith of the nations, and he who questioned their eternal truth would have been bold indeed. Just as she knew with unclouded clarity that Mary was the Mother of God, so did she know that the woman who took one misguided step was an outcast. All honest employment was closed to her. No decent man would marry her, not even the decent man who had assisted in her downfall. Even as she transgressed it, Kitty believed that this code of behaviour was right. Society depended upon it. Any other code would have been unthinkable. Perhaps the world could survive one transgressor, or even several, but if everyone suddenly turned his back upon the code it would have been as dangerous to humanity as if the sun suddenly ceased to appear each morning. One could try, of course, to hide the disgrace, but the myth left little hope that one would succeed. In fact the plays, the books, and the feeling in the air left little doubt that the survival of mankind depended solely upon discovering each peccadillo and punishing it ruthlessly. One could not plead ignorance nor extenuating circumstances and throw oneself upon the mercy of the court. There was no excuse for ignorance, when every girl was taught how to behave in her cradle. And there were no extenuating circumstances when every human being was strictly on his own, and by his own unaided effort made the bed he lay in.

Hers was a classic case, and she now faced a classical denouement, which gave a tinge of desperation to all she thought and did when she saw herself caught, and Lucian trying to escape. Indeed, she had to believe him. She even had to trust him. And she had to remind herself of that other set of myths in which she did not yet have perfect faith: that in America anything can happen, that the beautiful poor girl is always Cinderella, that the dashing young rich man always married for love, that all were equal, with equal chances. And that anything, or almost anything, could be condoned, or would come out right in the end if it were done in the name of love. For love was something sweet, unchanging, noble, and the inalienable right of every American, male and female.

On the first Sunday in June, as the rented horse trotted toward Westport Harbor, Kitty said abruptly, "I'm expecting, Lucian. We have to be married right away."

Although this was quite in the classical pattern of Kitty's myth, it was definitely not part of Lucian's design for the Dandy and the Beauty. Annoyance flickered across his face. "You're surely not serious, Kitty."

"Mother of God, is it a thing I'd joke about?" She clenched her hands in her lap, hard fists of anger buried in the folds of the green silk dress he'd given her.

He stared straight ahead, his mouth set grimly, his eyes slightly squinted against the glare of the summer sunlight. "You can't possibly be sure. It's only two months since——"

"I'm sure."

"But you can't be! I'll take you to a doctor next week. It's only because you've been worried. I am myself, but——"

"I went to a doctor last night. He thinks I'm a month gone."

"Who did you go to? Some quack, I suppose, that——"

"I went to him that set my bone."

"Oh, my God! Don't you know he's the mill doctor? Did he ask you who——"

"He did not. But he said I'd best be married in a hurry if I wanted to keep my name clean in the town."

Lucian slapped the reins over the horse's back angrily, and it trotted faster. "What a mess! If there's anything I can't stand it's a sordid, vulgar mess!" He turned to her savagely. "Why did you let it happen? Haven't you any better sense than to——"

She shrank from him, feeling his coldness for the first time. "I let it happen. What are you talking about? You think I wanted this?"

He shot an oblique look at her, a look of real hatred. Perhaps she had wanted it, he thought. Perhaps it was her crude way of forcing him to do what in her heart she knew he didn't want to do. "I'll inquire around Providence. We'll find somebody who will perform an operation for you. But it'll take time—maybe a week or two."

"No. I'll have no operation. There'll be many things against me at my Judgment, Lucian, but not the murder of my child." She pronounced it "murther", and the sound grated on him. How he hated the Irish, the whole immigrant ruck and muck of them! "Jesus,

Mary, and Joseph, can't you understand how much we've done already to anger God?" She shouted to make herself heard above the clatter of the buggy wheels and the pounding hoofs.

He also shouted. "Damn it! Do you have to get religious at a time like this?" Then, realizing the absurdity of yelling insults at each other as the buggy racketed along a country road, he reined the horse in to an easy trot. "Kitty, an operation is the only sensible thing. If my father ever finds out about us he won't let me stay on at the mill. And I'm not the kind who can live on nothing, even if you are."

She stared at the oaks, bright in their new foliage, and at the dark laurel under them; but she saw nothing of the clean, still world they passed. "Sure, sooner or later we'd be having babies anyhow. So it's only a little quicker than we planned."

"Well, we can't be married tomorrow. Maybe if I sold the stocks when we first talked of it—but now the bottom's dropped out of them. They wouldn't bring enough to keep us for a month."

"Lucian, were you lying when you said we'd marry?"

"Of course not! You know the strain I've been under. I'm doing the best I can. It simply takes time."

"There's no more time now."

"That's why you must have an operation."

"No. We'll be married now. This week."

Anger flared again in him. No one could tell him what he must do. No one could take his plans and twist them out of all resemblance to what he intended. "And suppose we won't be. What then?"

"I'll go to your father and tell him everything."

Now he understood her, he thought. She was low enough to yield to him and low enough to blackmail him. But he held the aces in this game, for she loved him, and he knew it. Besides, she'd committed herself to prostitution now. There was no other way, in his world, for a woman with a bastard to earn a living. But he only said, with false carelessness, "He'll never believe you."

"He'll believe me," said Kitty McCarran.

He slowed the horse to a walk and slipped his arm around her, drawing her reluctant body close. "It's silly to quarrel. I think an operation is best, but—If we marry this way, all hugger-mugger, we'll really be awfully poor."

"Like Rosie and Andrew?"

"Not that bad. But there won't be any pretty dresses."

She sighed. "We'll manage somehow. We'd best get the priest to marry us tomorrow. It's a pity you're not a Catholic yet."

"We can't be married in Fall River. All hell would pop before we got away. I think we should go up to Boston. Then we'd never have to come back here if we didn't want to."

"When? When can we go?"

"Soon as I get some money together. I'll let you know."

She sighed again, not quite believing him, yet not daring to distrust him now: it was too late, far too late, to begin to doubt now.

7

Lucian had to go to Boston to make the final arrangements for his honeymoon voyage and to pick up some clothes he was having made. It did not inconvenience him to have Kitty along, for when he wanted to get rid of her he need merely give her a few dollars and send her shopping, an activity in which she took an unalloyed delight. He discovered this when he took her straight from the train to Jordan Marsh to buy a plain suit, hat, and gloves: for he could not be seen with her in a hotel, nor indeed anywhere, while she was dressed in the ornate green silk gown she was so fond of. The only other things she had were pauper clothes that looked as if they'd come off the rack of a second-hand store.

She did not understand Boston at all. Things for which he had an inbred awe she found commonplace, even slightly ridiculous. Both North Church and South Church were for her devoid of beauty and holiness. "But since they're only for Protestants, belike it doesn't matter." She saw no reason why people should cherish purple glass window panes. "If 'twere me, I'd put new in it so it wouldn't look so patchy." He explained they turned purple with age. "All the more reason. I can't abide old things." The meagreness and grime of Faneuil Hall shocked her. "Why, it's nothing but a fish market!" She thought Durgin Park a dreadfully common place to eat, and she could not understand why Lucian prized it so highly. "It's just like eating in somebody's kitchen. Not ladylike at all."

"Is there anything you like about Boston, Kitty?"

"The stores are wonderful, and the the-ayter. But for the rest, it's like my father said. 'Tis nothing but a flint-hearted Yankee town."

"Not any more," said Lucian. "The Irish have taken it over now."

"Oh? Very likely 'twill improve then," Kitty answered serenely. "Given time."

He took a perverse enjoyment in what he was doing. He had never planned anything so carefully, nor executed anything with such skill. The thought of what would happen to Kitty when he left her excited him physically and brought a wildness, an exquisite tension, to his lovemaking. It was a useful thing to discover about oneself: that one liked cruelty—of a rather special, nebulous sort. He wouldn't have dreamed of beating a woman. It never occurred to him, as he listened to her chatter about their coming marriage or watched her put on ludicrous airs, that she was either pathetic or valiant. She had let him down by becoming pregnant. She had spoiled his plans. What should have been a fashionable liaison between the Dandy and the Beauty had become, because of her crudity, a low-life, Irish mess. All this amounted to a betrayal of Lucian: it gave him the *right* to vengeance.

He had told her they'd have to wait three days in Boston before they could be married because that was the law. On the afternoon of the third day, he said, "I think I'll run over to the clerk's office and pick up our licence. It'll save us that much time in the morning."

"But it's only two and a half days, Lucian, so likely the man won't give it to you."

"Oh, a politician will do anything for five dollars."

"I'll go with you. Wait till I——"

"No, Kitty. Ladies don't go to political bureaus. Not even into the buildings. It just isn't done."

She flushed, half hating him. "But I don't want to wait here all alone."

"Take a nap. Then we'll go dancing tonight."

"Aren't you tired, too? After all the walking we've done this day, I——" She was wistfully reluctant that he leave, as if she sensed calamity.

"I'll take a cab both ways. You go to sleep and I'll be back before you wake up." He waved gaily from the door, and she tried to smile back as gaily. She heard him whistling in the hall. Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-a—— She heard the elevator door clang open to admit him, clang shut after him. Then an oppressive, late-afternoon silence settled over the whole floor. For a while she stood in the centre of the dismal room, as if bewildered, listening to the silence.

She took a bath, soaking a long time in the steaming water. Bathing in tubs was a luxury she could not take for granted merely by indulging in it a few times. When she was dry and in her wrapper, Lucian still had not come. She lay down, and because she really was tired, she fell



into an uneasy dozing slumber, at first starting awake when she heard the rare clanging of the elevator door or a firm male step in the hall. But since nothing came of these alarms, she finally slept soundly.

It was dark when she wakened suddenly, her heart pounding in terror; yet if she had dreamed, she could not remember it. She sat upright in the bed, clutching the blanket to her chin, staring into the darkness, listening. Not a sound in the corridor outside, not a sound in the room. Empty, except for herself. She felt its emptiness.

The window blind flapped gently against the open window, and she gasped, half choking on her own throttled scream.

"Lucian?"

The curtain blew inward on the fresh night air, like a white ghost wavering on the sill. Softly, as if afraid to disturb the silence, she got up, hugging her wrapper around her, crossed the room and shut the window. She looked out at the lights of Boston, and at a clock on a tower down the street. It was ten minutes after eleven.

He's been killed, she thought. Robbed, left lying dead in the street. No—run over by a dray and taken to a hospital. She paced the floor, thinking she should dress and go looking for him, afraid that if she did he would return the minute she left. She did dress, wasting time over it, brushing her hair, buffing her nails. She'd bought a buffer on one of her shopping trips because it was such a ladylike possession.

She'd wait until one, then do something. The streets outside grew quiet, deserted, the gas lights making lonely yellow circles on the empty pavements; and between the islands of light the lonely black stretches with God alone knew what dangers lurking in their mystery.

By one o'clock she decided he must have met friends and gone somewhere with them. He must intend to come back because he'd left money, crumpled bills, on the dresser, and there was his valise on a chair, and his shaving things in the bathroom. It was all proof that he'd be back.

At two she decided to sleep again. She took off her clothes and got into bed. She could not sleep.

She lay on her back, staring at the ceiling. The light from the hall came through the transom, casting a dim glow over it. She watched shadows move across it, shadows from things outside, things beyond her life. With a little watching the shadows took on grotesque shapes and manners, becoming like the images a madman sees in the clouds. They flitted, long and narrow, poking fingers at her in mockery. They crouched in corners, shaking as if in wild fits of silent laughter. They

waddled across the ceiling, lingering to leer down at her like lecherous fat men. She lay rigid, pinioned in torment beneath the host of hovering imps.

The shadows left with the coming of dawn. It crept into the room, grey, unfriendly, gaunt as truth, and quite unlike the harbinger of a summer day. She did not cry. The shambles Lucian had made of her life was too great to cry over. And even then, when she knew the truth, she did not blame herself. He had seduced her. All the effort, all the lies, all the responsibility had been his. And now he'd left her, and the money on the bureau was to pay her off like a whore.

She counted the money. It was exactly a hundred dollars. She began to laugh hysterically. One way you looked at it, it was a lot: more money than she'd ever before seen all together. Another way, it wasn't much: not much to buy a life with.

She began to cry while she was still laughing. Her body doubled up with sobs and laughter. There was no one to slap her into sanity. She had to take another bath to calm herself. Then she dressed carefully, put the money into her purse, and did the only thing she could think of: she went out to find a priest.

When she entered the church, the Mass was being said. She knelt at the back to wait, thankful that there were but few people. The words of the Mass flowed over her, musical Latin jumble, familiar and remote, comforting and awesome. She thought of her father, who through wilful heresy had denied himself this sanctuary. For the first time since his death she really missed him, really longed for him and loved him with all the abandon of pent-up, thwarted emotion that suddenly finds a legitimate object. He hadn't been much good, with his blasphemies, his rebellion, and his whisky. But he'd never condemned any one except for meanness: for all other sins he had only excuses and charity. If he were alive now he'd stand by her in this trouble, live through it with her, and even, in the process, find something to laugh about. Perhaps if he'd lived, though, she wouldn't have got into this trouble. You did all sorts of things, from loneliness, that you didn't have to do if someone—anyone—were beside you, loving you.

She remembered that she'd never had the Mass said for the repose of his soul. She thought of him trapped in Purgatory. Perhaps God was punishing her because she had failed in her duty to Rafe McCarran, sinner that he was. For the sins of the fathers——

The Mass was over. She crossed herself hurriedly and almost ran down the aisle to catch the priest before he could escape. "Father! Father! I'm in trouble. Help me——"

He was a young man, new to his job. "But, daughter, your own Confessor——"

She clutched his arm. "Help me, Father. Sure I'm a stranger here, and I've nowhere to turn, and nobody to——"

He led her into a small chapel where the Virgin looked down upon them, bland, benign. A candle burned at Her feet, but as they entered it guttered and went out. "I'll do what I can. Tell me quickly. I've another Mass in half an hour."

She poured out the story, jumbled, incoherent. Yet even so, censored. As she told it, all the blame fell upon Lucian. She did not mention that she had ever hoped to gain anything from the association: some dividend from love commensurate with the risk.

It was not a problem he could solve. But—"Perhaps if you go to the man's father——"

"Oh, he's a hard man, and a heretic at that! He'll kick me from my job, and I'll never get another, and no one will speak to me, and I'll have the baby to feed—— Oh, Father, I can't go on the streets! I can't!"

He sighed. He felt sorry for her, yet at the same time she repelled him. It did not really seem to him that her punishment was unjust, nor that the life she faced was too great a price to pay for the sin she had committed. Being young, he found the flesh a sore trial. Indeed, he was learning to hold the sins of the flesh in fanatical abhorrence. "No, you can't go on the streets. You must keep your job as long as possible and save your money. Then——"

"But 'tis only four dollars a week! How can I save on——"

"Those are fine wages for a woman. When it's time for your baby, go to the Sisters. They'll help you, and you can leave the baby with them. After that—— Who knows? If you're truly repentant and keep yourself pure perhaps some day some good man will take pity on you and marry you. God is merciful, daughter."

She began to cry. "But I can't go home—not now!" She thought of facing Rosie and the rest of them. He thought she meant she had no money.

He groped beneath his vestments for his pockets. He handed her ten dollars. "That's all I have. It should see you home."

She hesitated a moment, then took the money. "Father, bless me! Bless me before you go!"

He blessed her.

She sat through the next Mass. It soothed her, and she thought what a comfort it was that no matter what she had done, no matter how terrible the future might be, she still had her religion.

She did not go back to the hotel immediately. She bought herself some breakfast, and she was surprised to find that she was really hungry. After all, she had not eaten for almost twenty-four hours. The day was bright and warm, glinting with early summer. She thought she would go look at the stores once more before she left Boston. It might be the last chance she'd ever have. She spent the remainder of the morning window shopping, and she ended by buying herself a pretty dress at Jordan's.

At the hotel she packed her things in Lucian's valise. She found that he had paid the bill—confirmation of his crime against her. But it was good he'd done so: she must hoard every cent now. She took the afternoon train back to Fall River.

Once there she bought a paper for the first time in her life. Riding in the trolley up Main Street she read about Lucian's marriage that morning to Adelaide Pugh. She looked at their pictures smiling up at her. She read all about what Adelaide had worn, and the list of the guests, and what had been served for breakfast, and how they were going to Europe now. She read it all without emotion, as if it were about people she didn't know—people in society who were no concern of hers.

## PART THREE

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### Barnabas

Kitty entered the tenement while the family was at supper. Rosie was the first to look up and see her standing in the doorway. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, look who's here. And dressed fit to kill."

Even Andrew could see that Kitty's clothes were not within reach of her income. "Welcome home, Kitty. We were worried about you."

"To put it mildly," said Minerva, who was also dressed in her best, the new suit and the hat of pure line.

Kitty stepped diffidently into the room. She could think of no story to tell them, nothing they'd believe. In the ruin she had scarcely thought of them at all, except perhaps as symbols of the larger world which had now become a jungle where every step was dangerous. These people, once so kind, had become wild beasts, waiting to pounce, to kill, to crunch her bones. The only difference between them and all the other human beasts was that she knew these, and she did not know the others. She did not blame them: she knew that were she in their place she would feel as they must feel, when they knew the truth. She did not believe that any one of them would understand her or excuse her. In fact, as she looked at their honest, tired faces, she could not understand or excuse herself. She must have been out of her mind! She could not say, as Aunt Minerva might say, that done was done, or that there was no use crying over spilt milk. She would cry the rest of her life, she thought now. Cry and hide. She was the quarry now, and it was natural that they should track her and kill her if they could: as natural as that the lion should hunt the doe. But the thing was to put it off, to shove away into the future the final awful moment of revelation and cruelty. She poured herself some tea and sat down among them.

"I suppose," said Rosie, "you ran off and got married."

"No," said Kitty, dully. "No, I didn't do that."

"We had the police looking for you," said Minerva. "Mr. Rubashevski suggested——"

"I'm sick and tired of that dirty Jew," said Rosie.

"Please, Rosie," said Andrew.

Minerva glared at her. "Bad for your milk to get yourself excited, girl."

"And how is the baby, now?" asked Kitty, hoping to divert them.

"She cries all night. Colicky. And if you've still got a job, you can thank me for it. I told them you were sick. But I doubt if they believed me."

Kitty murmured, "Thanks, Rosie."

Mrs. McCarran said, "Just where was you, dearie?"

"I was in Boston."

"Saints defend us!" said Rosie.

Mrs. McCarran shook her head sadly, "Oh, now, that's a wicked place!"

"How'd you get there?" asked Minerva.

Kitty licked her dry lips and gulped. "I—why, I went for a walk after church, and I went to the railroad station, and there was a train, and I——" They watched her, waiting suspiciously as she stumbled. "And I thought now, why shouldn't I go to Boston and look for a better job? Maybe in a store, or——"

Minerva's eyes travelled from Kitty's flushed face down the length of the smart new suit. "And you made enough money in three days to buy a new suit?"

"Oh no! I got lost. Holy Mother of God, such a place that Boston is! And I wandered in the streets till I was nearly crazy, and I'd no money, you see, and no way to get home, and my dress got all spoiled, and I'd no place to sleep, so I lay down on the ground in the park, and then a lady found me and took me home with her, and she gave me this suit and my fare home."

"Sure is a good fit for a hand-me-down," said Rosie.

"You don't believe me."

"Frankly, no. I don't."

"Please, Rosie," said Andrew. "If Kitty says that's what happened, then that's what happened."

"You think I haven't eyes in my head? First she drives Philip away, then she gets in trouble with that stinking Portuguese, and then she starts sneaking out every Sunday, the saints only know where. And now she's gone to Boston and come back tricked out in a suit that cost a fortune. It's plain as the nose on your face, she has some rich man on the string. She's nothing but a fancy woman, and if you had any gumption you'd kick her out before she turns this place into a whore house!"

"Rose!" gasped Mrs. McCarran. "Such langwidge!"

"I'll go," said Kitty.

"Where?" demanded Minerva.

"I don't know. Does it matter?"

"Yes, it does," said Andrew. "No lone woman's going out of my house to walk the streets."

"He's right, Kitty," said Minerva. "Rosie is upset because the baby's sick. We must make allowances for her."

Rosie got wearily to her feet, picked up her dishes, and set them in the sink. "I gotta go feed the baby. Nobody has to make allowances for me, Aunt Minerva. Just because I'm not taken in by her pretty face don't mean I'm a fool. Can't you get it through your heads we're not good enough for her? Honest work isn't good enough for her, Philip wasn't good enough for her, and now it seems just plain decency isn't good enough for her."

"Oh now, Rosie," begged Andrew. "Kitty's as decent as anybody. And what she does is her own business——"

"Ruining all our reputations is our business, and seeing my baby grow up in a decent home is my business. There's only one way a girl like her gets such clothes, and I know what it is, if you don't. Sex, that's what it is. Just plain, rotten sex!"

Minerva nearly dropped her teacup. Andrew turned red. Mrs. McCarran crossed herself, which gave her strength to rise to the occasion. "Rosie Donovan, you leave this room! And don't come back till you've learned the talk of decent people. Holy Mary, that I should live to hear me own grandchild speak such a word out loud!" She dredged her rosary from her pocket and began to click her beads for the salvation of Rosie's soul.

Rosie left the room, secretly ashamed of the enormity of her lewdness.

"I'm sorry this happened, Kitty," said Andrew. "Rosie's cross as a bear since the baby got sick. Please try to forget it and stay on with us."

"I have to stay on," said Kitty. "For sure there's not another place on earth I can go, except the streets."

Minerva looked at her sharply, wondering if, in addition to a madwoman and a shrew, they were now going to have a martyr on their hands.

Day after day, as Kitty sat on her high stool inspecting cloth, her thoughts walked a treadmill of useless plans, impossible dreams, wild hopes that somehow something would happen to rescue her from the coming disgrace. She had seventy-seven dollars, the remainder of the money Lucian had left in Boston. It was not enough to take her back to Ireland, where she might lie herself into respectability. She could go to New York, but everyone said work was scarce, that there were ten immigrants for every job, and anyway, who'd hire a bad woman?

As the July heat crept into every corner of the tenement, Rosie's baby grew more fretful. It was a wizened gnome, haunted by coughs, fevers, and rashes. The more numerous its ills, the more irascible Rosie became. She hurled recriminations upon Kitty, who could still work, who had pretty clothes, whose impassive beauty grew more dramatic as Rosie's childish prettiness faded in the summer heat. She felt for Kitty the eternal jealousy of the overburdened good woman for the evil beauty who with no effort can rob her of her husband, home, and pay-check, and then walk the streets gaily decked out in ill-gotten finery. Everything that happened was Kitty's fault: the washing that got rained on, the fire that wouldn't draw, the rent that wasn't paid, the oatmeal that burned, the baby's new rash.

Minerva escaped. She appeared less and less often at supper, offering no excuse except to say, "I can't stand bickering." She and Rubashevski now worked together in some sort of partnership which Minerva never explained. She punctiliously paid her share of the tenement's expenses, whether or not she was there to eat the food. She often paid the doctor's bills for the baby and bought the patent medicine that Rosie was always pouring down its throat. But this did not endear her to Rosie, who railed at Andrew about "his junkie aunt". She never called Rubashevski anything but "that dirty Jew", or "that damned foreigner".

All in all, life in the tenement came slowly to resemble life in a nightmare. Only Mrs. McCarran escaped unscathed, into her madness.

Toward the end of July Rosie decided that Kitty was pregnant. In the midst of the ensuing tirade Kitty went to her room, shutting the door. Methodically, dully, she began to pack her things, with Rosie's shouts ringing through the frail walls. When she came back into the kitchen, she said, "Andrew, I've leaving. Can you help me get my things to a hotel?"



Rosie had never believed she would really go. Now, for the first time, she thought of Kitty's wages. The enormity of this loss so angered her that she screamed, "So now it's a hotel! It kills me! Will you take me to my hotel, she says!"

Andrew shouted, "Rosie, if you don't shut up, I'll hit you! You've done all this yourself, driven her out. First Philip, and now——"

"Philip! A lot I had to do with that! She drove him out, the dirty slut!"

"*Shut up!* You're driving everyone crazy! What's Kitty ever done to you that——"

"I'll show you how I'll shut up, Andrew Hawkes!" Rosie ran to Andrew's work table, snatched up the drawings of the new invention, and before anyone could stop her, she opened the stove and threw them on the fire.

He cried out, and it was like a cry of pain.

Rosie laughed. "That'll teach you! Now maybe you'll quit wasting time on nonsense and help me around here. Now maybe——"

Then Andrew did hit her. She had not expected that either. For a moment, in startled acceptance of the blow, she was meek, her wan face still, her round, blue eyes swimming with sudden tears. He took her arm and pulled her to their bedroom. He locked her in, giving the key to Mrs. McCarran. "You can let her out when we've gone, Gramma."

Bridie shook her head in woe because they had now come to beatings, and the family was breaking up, and perhaps it all came from the terrible error of mixed marriages. But in justice she said, "You done right, Andrew. The devil's got into her lately."

Kitty kissed Mrs. McCarran. "Goodbye, Aunt Bridie."

"God bless you, dearie. And don't you worry about a thing. I'll bring your dinner tomorrow like always." Beneath this burden of a new parting she began to hum, quite happily, one of her off-key old country tunes.

As they walked along the dark streets, Andrew pushing Kitty's luggage in Minerva's old cart, he said, "I'm sorry it happened, Kitty. The way she gets notions, it's enough to scare you."

"It's true what she said, Andrew. I did go to Boston with a man, and he bought me things, and I—I'm going to have a baby."

"It wasn't Philip?"

"No."

"I want to help you, Kitty. Isn't there some way we can make him marry you?"

"No. He's married."

They walked on in silence disturbed only by the cart bumping and creaking over the uneven pavement. Andrew felt a painful sympathy for Kitty. She was not a bad girl, he thought, nor a stupid one. The most he could concede against her was that she might be weak. And, of course, in his world, the weak were pushed to the wall, crushed, mutilated past any usefulness. Survival of the fittest in the interests of progress. As he contemplated Kitty's long future his thoughts took a blasphemous turn: he questioned the gospel of progress and survival and righteousness that decreed such cruel extinction for the wayward. As if, he thought, there is a quality in beauty that we fear. He could find no words to tell her what he felt. One does not say, of the ruin of a life, that he is sorry.

"Go to Mr. Olney, Kitty. Don't lie to him. He's a just man, and he'll help you."

"He's a hard man, Andrew. He'll kick me on to the streets."

"No, Kitty. He's the only one who can help you. I'll do what I can, but we haven't enough money to——"

"Andrew, I didn't mean to bring trouble to you people. I didn't mean to do you any wrong."

3

At the hotel her money melted away fast. It was not the best hotel by any means, but her room, the cheapest and dingiest in the place, cost more than she earned. Her meals, which she had to eat in restaurants, seemed to her to be exorbitantly expensive. In two weeks she spent twenty-five dollars. At that rate she would be destitute in another month. She began to starve herself, living on coffee and toast. Or she would buy herself a sack of day-old sugar buns at the bakery and dole them out to herself through the day until the mere thought of swallowing another of the sticky sweet things nauseated her. She began to crave meat, and when the longing for it grew insupportable, she would waste a dime on a hot pork pie, and even while, lingeringly, she savoured the delectable solidity of it, she reproached herself for the extravagance.

All the horror of her situation became focused, finally, on money, on the fear of destitution. To plan for her own and her baby's future was too impossible a task: they too obviously had no future. When Lucian returned she could surely make him pay her something, but he would not be home for months, and by then she would be dead

of starvation, and the hotel would put her out in the streets because she couldn't pay, and she would have lost her job, such as it was. Her thoughts revolved around nickels and dimes. She planned the expenditure of a penny more exactly than Morgan planned the investment of a million dollars. Once she lost a nickel: it must have fallen from her pocket, or some one in the cloth-room had stolen it. All the despair of her situation became symbolized in this terrible loss. She felt sick over it, so that for a day she could not eat at all, nor sleep. It terrified her to have brought home to her so brutally the ease with which one could lose money, and the horror of the loss.

For years afterwards—perhaps for the rest of her life—the discovery of this loss seemed to her the most awful moment she had ever endured. In later times, when she had nightmares, they turned around this nickel: in the dreams she would see herself, always naked, old, and gaunt, scrabbling through piles of filthy refuse with frantic desperation, looking for the nickel which she could never find. She would burrow through whole mountains of filth, sobbing in despair. With a sense of shocked surprise she would uncover the statue of Mercury poised on one toe, or her green silk dress, all in tatters, or bolts and bolts of freshly woven cloth, or a new-born baby which she would hastily, guiltily, bury again in the filth. Always there would come a moment of triumph in her dream when she saw something round and small and bright, gleaming in the refuse. But when she scrabbled to retrieve it, sometimes even after she clutched it in her hand and the triumph surged through her, it would turn into a smooth, rounded stick. She would look at it with a feeling of unbelievable disgust and shame, and she would throw it away and then run and run to escape it until her lungs were bursting and her legs were melting with weariness. She never dared to look behind her all during this wild exhausting chase, which lasted until she woke up, because she could hear the stick back there, pursuing her in great leaps. It lunged and leaped and landed on the ground balanced upright, trembling. Clop, it landed after every leap. Clop. Clop.

She took to keeping records of her money on torn scraps of paper that she picked up in the streets. Each night she would sit on her bed and spread her hoard around her, stacking all the coins in separate piles, and the bills according to their denominations. Then she would count it several times, and write down exactly what she had spent, and for what she had spent it. To do this seemed to her to be not only a protection against loss, but it was also a ceremony of almost magical value. It was as if, by revering the money in this manner, it would

finally give her a sign, talk to her, tell her what to do. But it never did. The separate piles merely grew smaller with the passing days, and as they grew smaller she worshipped them with a more desperate fanaticism.

Until finally she came to hate Lucian not for his betrayal of her trust and love, nor even for his abandonment, but because he had money and she did not. She began to feel that anything she did would be justified if only it brought her money, and to feel also that disgrace was nothing like as hard to endure as destitution. After she came to these conclusions she did a little better, which proved that she was finally on the right track. One day, for instance, when the bakery was crowded, the man forgot to charge her for her buns. The next time she went in he reminded her of this, and although her heart pounded furiously with fright she told him calmly that he had made a mistake: it must have been someone else who had failed to pay. He looked at her doubtfully, but he did not insist, although he didn't apologize for insulting her, either. So that was ten cents saved.

Another time she found a quarter on the clothroom floor, and she picked it up quickly before anyone saw her. That made up for her lost nickel, with a bit of interest besides. Then she remembered Aunt Bridie and the dinners she brought to the mill for her dead daughters. The very next day she waylaid the old woman.

"Hello, Mama," she said. "You've brought my dinner now, I hope. For it's the truth, I'm starving."

Happily Bridie surrendered the lunchbox to her. But, "You're looking peaked, Mary," she said. "Sure they're not working you too hard now, are they?"

"Hard enough so I could use a bit of meat for dinner sometimes," said Kitty.

The next day Bridie brought her a sandwich made of bacon ends.

These dinners helped a lot. They made it possible for Kitty to get along with only tea and toast, or a bowl of cereal, for supper, and they saved her from fifteen cents to a quarter a day, which was quite a triumph. But it was not enough. Her money still melted away at an alarming rate.

In August the heat became an added misery. Her room was a mere cubbyhole with only one small window that opened against the brick wall of the next building. She dared not prop the door open to get cross ventilation lest someone enter while she slept and steal her money. Night after night she tossed on her bed, a prisoner of heat and worry.

Finally, when she could endure it no longer, she took to spending the early hours of the evening in the lobby, although it was certainly an unladylike thing to do. She would return from work, sponge herself off with cold water, dress herself neatly, and go out for her tea and toast. Then she would walk up and down Main Street a bit, window shopping. By eight o'clock she would begin to feel frightened to be out so late, alone, and she would return to the hotel, take her place in one of the sticky, leather-covered chairs, and pretend to read one of the newspapers that the salesmen were always leaving around the lobby.

One night she wore her green silk dress. She knew it made her look conspicuously dressed up, but she couldn't help that. It was almost the only thing she could get into now, for she was beginning to thicken through the waist. She had scarcely got settled in her chair when a man sat down beside her. He was plump, balding, and middle-aged. "Hot enough for you?" he said.

She pretended not to hear him.

"Noticed it was a hundred and two's afternoon on the thermometer at the First Trust and Savings."

She rattled her newspaper, turning the pages.

"Know who you remind me of? Anna Held. The actress. Great little beauty, Anna Held. But——" He laughed apologetically. "I guess you're on the stage yourself. Probably know more about Anna Held than I do."

She looked up. For a moment her great eyes rested full on his perspiring face. Then she looked down at her paper again.

"Guess you think I got a nerve, talking to a girl like you. But you get lonesome, travelling around. I'm in ladies' neckwear. Bowen's the name. You just ask anybody around here if he knows Jake Bowen, see what he says. Been in this territory twenty-two years. Imagine that! Twenty-two years! How's that for a reference, huh?" He laughed ingratiatingly. "I tell you, girlie, you got to keep your skirts clean if you want to keep working over the same territory for twenty-two years!"

She knew that she should get up and walk away. But wouldn't it make her look foolish, after she'd let him talk on for so long? Besides, she had as much right in the lobby as he had.

"You know, the minute I saw you I said to myself, Jake, I said, there's one sweet little girl. You remind me of my daughter. That's a fact now. I'm not kidding. You got that same sweet innocent look around the eyes my little girl's got. And another thing I said to myself

was this. She don't belong here, I said. That's what made me think you're probably on the stage. That's one thing travelling does for you. Makes you notice things like that. You know, girlie, you meet hundreds of people in the travelling line, literally hundreds. So where'd you be if you didn't learn to size 'em up? Just answer me that. Where *would*—you—be? So the minute I saw you, I said to myself, now there's a little lady, pretty as a picture, that's just eating her heart out from lonesomeness. Probably a stranger in town, just like I am myself, probably lives in New York, because she don't look like no small town hick—those were my very words, Miss, that I said to myself. So I said, Jake, here's where you do your good deed for the day and try to cheer the little lady up. Because any way you look at it, girlie, there's no harm in weeping on a man's shoulder that's probably old enough to be your father. So what say we hop a trolley and go down to the Stone Bridge? Get ourself a whiff of ocean breezes and maybe stoke up on a little lobster. Huh? How about it?"

It was the mention of food that decided her. "All right," she said, standing up.

All the way out to the Stone Bridge he talked. They sat on the veranda of the inn and ate lobster, and he continued to talk. Then he suggested they take a little walk. When they reached a secluded spot, windswept, sheltered from the moon by a few scrubby oaks, he said, "How about sitting down here a minute? Get a load off our feet. Say, that's some breeze! Nothing like a little old ocean breeze when it's a hundred in the shade, huh?" He pulled her down beside him. Then, methodically, with heavy, unimaginative determination, he began to make love to her.

Her flesh shrank from his clammy hands. "Don't touch me!"

He laughed. "Who you think you're kidding, baby?" And he began to unfasten the buttons of her bodice.

She tried to pull away from him, but his arm was around her, and he held her fast. "Listen, girlie, what is this anyhow?" His tone was aggrieved. "You trying to pull a fast one? Giving me the come on back there in the lobby, — you got some dim idea I'm not dry behind the ears?"

"I—I was hungry. You said——"

"All right! All right! So you got your feed, didn't you? Then what's the complaint? Now don't get me wrong. I'm not the kind of guy goes around raping innocent little girlies, but you ain't innocent, baby. And you're old enough to know by this time there's nothing in this life that's free. So what'd you expect?"

She tried to pull away again, but he kept tight hold of her. "I—you said you wanted company. I thought, just a trolley ride—and——" She sobbed: "I can't do this! I can't!"

"It's not going to be a bit different this time than it was the first time, I assure you. Listen, girlie, I like you. I got nothing in this world for you but the feeling of the deepest respect, like I got for all women. Because it's like they say, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Now you say you can't do this. And I respect you for it. But you got to be realistic, girlie. You got a big future ahead of you, once you bring yourself to face the facts. I'm only trying to help you, that's all. Because I got the deepest respect——"

"I can't do it! I can't!"

"Look, girlie. I'm not a bad guy. Reasonably clean, and I got no diseases, and you ask anybody around if Jake Bowen's out to get something for nothing." He groped in his pocket and handed her a crumpled bill. "There. That better?" She felt his hand like a slick, wriggling fish, against her breast. "You know, you could of picked a lot worse guys than me. But you ought to get into a real nice house where they got a select clientele. Hanging around hotels where you get exposed to all sorts of riff-raff—that's no kind of life for a little lady like you." He pushed her back, crushing her body with his own. There was no way to escape him. She clutched his crumpled money in her hand, and she lay still, hating him, hating herself.

She did not cry. She lay on the ground while his heavy rapacious body worked over her, and with her eyes wide open staring at the stars she savoured prostitution. And she faced the fact which until now she had pushed blindly from her mind: this was the way, and the only way, that she could earn a living from now on.

When she got back to the hotel she added the dollar he had given her to her little hoard. Then she spent the rest of the hideous, hot night ripping her green silk dress into tiny shreds with a pair of manicure scissors.

The next morning she went to see Barnabas Olney.

All the efforts of his underlings never succeeded in making Barnabas Olney inaccessible. No one could convince him that there was merit in the modern industrial convention which set management upon a pedestal. He was the survivor of an older tradition, one which was

already dying when, as a youth, he had gone into his father's mill. He did not himself remember the days when Yankee manager and Yankee help had worked side by side in the old small mills, but he behaved as if he remembered them. He disagreed with the new school of thought which held that management conferred rights upon a man but no duties. He held the anachronistic notion that a man should know the men who worked for him, be concerned for their welfare, find the time and inclination to inquire about the health of their wives and children, help them in trouble and rejoice with them in good fortune. There was in Barnabas a compulsion to assert the dignity of man. It was unfortunate, even a little sad, that this should be so. The times were wrong for the assertion. He might shout it to the heavens and there would be no response, save, ironically, a hollow echo lost in the grumble of his own machines.

With dismay he watched himself and his world engulfed in a vast impersonal system of abstractions: where the market ceased to be buyer and seller, and became Supply and Demand, Gog and Magog, a law unto themselves; where the machine, which cost money, dictated to the man, who could be hired for almost nothing; where property ceased to be land, buildings, gold, and became Capital: where the goal of work ceased to be a useful product and became a pay envelope, never, by the ruthless edicts of Gog and Magog, big enough. In the old days one had bought cotton, fabricated it, and sold cloth. Now one gambled in futures, computed man-hours, converted sweat into dividends, and manipulated Capital by means of shares. In dismay he listened to men talk with the dismal conviction that they did not know what they talked about, nor ever could know since every word dragged them deeper into abstraction, further from reality.

With dismay he watched the immigrants, wave after wave, come beating against the doors of his mills, demanding work, any work on any terms; men he could never know, for they spoke another tongue, feared a different God; men for whom his justice might well be unjust. Between the waves of men came the waves of new machines, clamouring to be bought, threatening him with ruin if he did not buy.

He walked through his mills, watching the spindles winding their millions of miles of thread, watching the looms mechanically weaving their thousands of miles of cloth. He looked at the help, who could not buy enough goods to cover themselves. For what end all this beautiful meshing of activity in which he was caught? Merely that futures might fluctuate, that Gog and Magog be appeased, that Capital be kept at



work, and a production statistic be printed somewhere for the satisfaction of men's souls?

He told himself that it was not good enough, not reason enough for such mad dissipation of the resources of men. There were times when he saw the whole structure as a house of cards which a breath would tumble down. Then he asked, Who will buy my cloth if the men who weave it cannot buy it? Clear came the answer from the Association, decreeing that wages must go lower, ever lower, as more men and more machines pounded at the door.

The Association said, if we raise wages, the South will take the market. If you raise wages, Barnabas Olney, your competitors will put you out of business. Supply sets the wages, demand sets the prices. That is the Law: violate it at your peril. Then the Association got down to business and fixed the wages, so that no member might pay more; and fixed the prices, so that no member might sell for less. Only Barnabas went forth from these meetings dissatisfied, imagining that he saw the shadows of doom in the sunlight.

Of course he was wrong, and the Association was right. Day after day, year after year, the evidence piled up, proving him wrong. His mills grew, his profits grew, the city grew, becoming the textile centre of the nation. The evidence proclaimed that there would never be an end to progress. Labour would always grow cheaper because the immigrants would never stop coming. The machines would never stop coming either, for there was no end to Yankee ingenuity. Capital would never stop growing, dividends would never stop growing, the country would never stop growing. They were all living in an Eden peopled by giants who woke up every morning half a head taller. Who was Barnabas to presume to see a serpent in the underbrush?

He was, of course, the born dissenter. Had the Association been pessimistic he would have dissented with optimism. He had a perverse habit of buying cotton when everyone else was selling, and of selling when everyone else was buying. When he found that his profits were decreasing in the face of Southern competition, he began to convert his mills to fine goods, which were not made in the South. By virtue of this habit of dissent he had accumulated wealth for which he had little use. It was not fear of losing money which prompted his dismay when he watched the world he was helping to create. What he feared was not poverty, but God; thus in his reverence dissenting even from the dissenters, who had by and large outgrown God. His dismay stemmed from no doubts of his personal security but from misgiving of his personal salvation, at times so profound that it was a shuddering

of the soul. Along with his other anachronistic ideas, he held the quaint notion that an outrage to man is an insult to God.

Kitty was in paralysing awe of him. He sensed her terror, and he thought, with distant pity, that something was wrong with all these new people. Men and women shouldn't be terrified, nor hold themselves in such low esteem that they couldn't speak up for themselves. But at least he recognized this girl, and that was something, a wedge of familiarity by which they might drive toward understanding.

"You're the girl who broke her collarbone. What troubles you now?"

"Andrew told me——"

He waited. When she did not go on, he said, "Yes? Andrew told you——"

"That you're not a hard man, sir." His grey eyes, seeming a little tired, rested patiently on her face. His resemblance to Lucian was uncanny, and this increased her fright. The likeness was so great as to make it seem redundant to tell him anything: he must know already. "I—may the Holy Virgin help me, sir! I'm in trouble."

He did not realize immediately what she meant. His speech and thoughts were plain. He did not have her need to be what Bridie McCarran called refined. "What kind of trouble?"

"A baby. I'm going to——"

The situation had confronted him before. After all, he had been managing the mill for fifteen years, and he employed nearly a thousand people. But, considering everything, it was surprisingly rare, which was fortunate, since he had no solution for it. In his society there could not be any solution for the problems arising from sex, since his society denied that sex existed. Whenever some fact confronted this denial, one must inevitably feel a chill of horror, as if one saw a ghost walking. His cousin Silence Bess was always crusading in behalf of unwed mothers, even dragging them into her unseemly speeches. But it was not Barnabas's experience that unwed mothers were a commonplace of daily life. On the whole the mill women were rigidly respectable, though during strikes or shut-downs the streets broke out in a rash of frightened prostitutes. This girl, he thought, had no such excuse to fall from virtue. He did prize virtue in a woman.

"We must see that the man marries you. Who was it?"

She had not thought this moment would be so hard to live through. She stood like a peasant, her feet planted too far apart, stolidly on the floor. Her hands twisted her skirt, and her throat felt tight, as if a hand squeezed it. "Lucian," she whispered. "It was Lucian." Spoken

aloud, this name which had filled her thoughts and her life for so long sounded strange, mythical, a name disembodied, imagined, a name without a man anywhere belonging to it. To speak it made her feel more certainly and more desperately alone. "Lucian Olney," she whispered.

A wooden ruler lay on the desk. Barnabas picked it up, played with it, snapped it in two. "Sit down, Miss McCarran. Tell me everything."

As he listened, he withdrew even his remote pity from her. She became a voice calling him to judgment. His Puritan heritage asserted itself, binding his conscience in its shackles, making the old inexorable demands. Kitty McCarran could sit there, pouring out the tale of his son's brutality, because she had been taught that only through an intermediary might her soul reach salvation. She had been taught that man is never alone so long as the Church stands between him and God. He could scarcely imagine the girl's distress, for he was not a woman. Yet, he thought, had he been one he would not have been able to take this easy way out. The puritan could not talk his way to peace, could not confess. For him there must always be the rock-bound silence of the old tradition; the proud bare agony, stripped to its glistening bone; the secret, for whose keeping his suffering conscience must forever pay blackmail to God.

As she talked she grew calmer and stopped crying. By the time she had got to the night in Boston when Lucian had left her, her voice was tired, dull, as if she talked about someone else. This, as much as anything, convinced Barnabas that she was telling the truth. "Why didn't you come to me immediately?" he asked.

She did not say, "I was afraid", which would have been the truth. She lowered her eyes to her hands, twisting in her lap. "It's the shame of it," she murmured. "But I can't go on the streets! It isn't in me to go on the streets, sir!"

"Have you no guilt in all this?" he asked softly. "Was all the evil Lucian's?"

Again she told him only half the truth. "I loved him," she whispered.

He gave her money for her hotel bill. "I'll investigate your story, Miss McCarran. I realize that secrecy is impossible for long, but for the moment it's best that you continue with your work. I'll send for you when I've decided what to do."

When she again walked into his office, her step had grown a little heavy, become the slow majestic stride of the pregnant peasant. This earth-bond of her flesh to its destiny made her more beautiful. Barnabas

realized that she was probably the most beautiful woman he had ever seen; and—simultaneously—that she was repulsive to him. His flesh shrank from hers with such repugnance that it would have cost him great effort to bring himself to touch her.

"I find your story true, Miss McCarran." He had, in fact, been ashamed of Lucian's careless stupidity in leaving such a broad track in Boston. "Since Lucian is not here, arrangements for your welfare must be made between us. Is there any place you'd like to go? Boston, perhaps? New York?"

What occurred to her was that he wanted to get rid of her. He was trying to buy her off, once and for all, to hide the disgrace. She felt her way cautiously. "I'm frightened of the cities."

He looked at her sharply. "But one may hide in them. And lie."

Her eyes narrowed craftily. The Olneys had everything. She had only this: that she carried their humiliation within her. Then why should she ever again sweat in a dirty mill, wear rags, eat sticky porridge, and count her hoarded pennies over in the night? "If it's all one to you, sir, I think I'll just stay here."

He smiled as if her decision pleased him; although she, having decided what his motives must be, did not believe he was pleased. "I think that's best. I have a farm near by where you can live. It's close enough to town to be convenient, but far enough out so that you won't have to see people if you don't want to."

"It'll be lonely on a farm, sir."

"In your situation, I think you might be lonely anywhere. But my cousin, Miss Silence Bess, owns the next farm, and she'll befriend you. She's in jail at present, but I believe her sentence has only a fortnight left to run."

"In jail! But I can't know people that——"

Barnabas laughed. "She's a suffragette, and it's a point of pride with her to spend as much time as possible in jail. I'm sure you'll find her very friendly and helpful."

Kitty thought it most unlikely, but she only said, "I'll need money, sir, if I'm not to work."

"Yes. I shall arrange it."

He seemed not to know that she was milking him, and that, because of the ease with which she did it, she now held him in contempt. But she gave no thought to this either: that Barnabas might be little concerned about her and greatly concerned about his grandchild. For never would Kitty McCarran fathom the Puritan mind, the rigorous, unbending spirit of the true dissenter, walking the path which in the

judgment of reason, not the judgment of faith, he considers right. It was inconceivable to her that Barnabas might have stricken Lucian from his life as surely as if he had killed him with his own hand. She could not know what Isaac, bound to the altar, had meant to Abraham.

5

Barnabas deeded the farm to Kitty in trust for her child, explaining to her that she could never dispose of any part of it: she was merely custodian of it. This small stricture seemed trifling. Why should she ever want to dispose of any of it? She was immensely pleased with it. It had a sound six-room cottage, various outbuildings, and thirty acres of fallow, rocky, windswept land, on which Barnabas suggested she might raise something—chickens or cows, to keep herself busy. He also created a small trust fund for her from mill stocks, explaining that it would pay her fifty dollars a month, and that he expected her to live on that amount. "Remember," he said, "you will have to pay taxes on this land, and I shall expect you to keep the house in repair. But perhaps if you raise some of your own food and exercise reasonable economy, you will be able to manage without undue hardship." He did not add that he also expected her to lead a decent, moral life from now on, but the implication was there.

Kitty was flabbergasted by her luck; because that was what it was, sheer, incredible, unbelievable luck. She had never known anyone, except, of course, Lucian, who'd had as much as fifty dollars a month to spend, and no rent to pay out of it. True, the house was full of shabby, old-fashioned furniture, worse than the place in Westport Harbor. But in time she could remedy that. And it was lonely. In her relief at being rescued from worry and poverty, she did not at first realize just how lonely it was.

It took her some time to get used to her new situation. Every day she would walk around her fields, marvelling that they were hers, for the old-world love of land was strong in her. Instinctively she looked up to the owners of property as to a race apart, and here she was, one of them. It could not have happened, she decided, anywhere but in America. She awoke each morning in *her own* bed, staring at *her own* four walls, *her own* roof over her head, and each morning she felt surprise anew, as if during her sleep she must have been transported back to Andrew's tenement, and she should by rights be waking in Minerva's old bed. For a while she cleaned the place and dusted as if

she were a maid in someone else's house: these things could not possibly belong to her. The illusion was heightened because the plain Yankee furniture was foreign to her, the sort of thing she did not like and never would have chosen for herself. Its very spirit was foreign to her: its simplicity, its hardness, its chastity of line, its functional honesty. The old saltbox house with its weathered shingles and all its contents had flowered from a world and from a necessity totally foreign to Kitty McCarran. She sometimes had the feeling that things were watching her slyly, as if waiting for her to go away and leave them in peace; as if they merely suffered her presence among them, knowing that in the long reaches of time, it would be they, not she, who would have the temerity to endure.

Try as she might, she could not subdue their silent self-assertion: they were at home here, and she was not. Whenever she stepped inside her own door after a walk in the fields or a visit to town, things caught her eye, accusing her of trespassing. It was an uncanny, disagreeable sensation, made all the worse because, in those early months of isolation and loneliness, Kitty was dependent upon the things for company.

She hung a crucifix in her bedroom. She put a bright statue of the Virgin in the living-room, with a vigil light burning under it. She put a Saint Anthony in the kitchen, and a Saint Joseph in the dining-room. They merely made things worse. The old pewter winked at the Virgin. The Hitchcock chairs seemed to suggest superciliously that St. Joseph was gaudy. Instead of bringing her comfort, her images added to her sense of strangeness in her own house. Not only she and her symbols, but all her antique heritage, were interlopers in this bare new world. The fairy tales on which she had been bred, the green romantic heart of Ireland that beat in vacillation from lyricism to despair, from rebellion to incompetence, the lush, comforting religion, the worn-out feudal glories running like tarnished threads through the Irish soul—all were trespassers here in this tight-lipped Puritan house. Slowly, through those first lonely months, a vivid animosity grew up between Kitty and her possessions.

Yet they were possessions, and more than she'd ever before owned in her life. As such she was constrained to treat them with a mixture of disbelief and respect. It was a long while before she could say "my house", "my farm", without a panicky fear that she was tempting fate merely to mention them. It would take years of possession to persuade her that the wages of sin is not necessarily death. And even then she would be compelled to pile possession on possession to buttress the persuasion, to convince herself that she was still alive, to deny with

tangible proof the validity of the myth that in her heart she still believed and always would believe, that no matter what the appearance, or what the luck, or what the justice, the wages of sin was still death, and always would be.

As the fall came on, with its inclement weather, she was often house-bound, cooped up with the unfriendly furniture and nothing to do but polish it as if she loved it, and to sew baby clothes. And she was growing so big that she often stayed home when she was nearly crazy to go out—stayed home deliberately on brisk, fine autumnal days—because she was ashamed to go to town in the stagecoach. Even if she were married, she would have hesitated to make a public display of her pregnancy. As it was—wouldn't people think she was boldly flaunting her disgrace in the face of the whole town?

She finally wrote Barnabas, somewhat diffidently, explaining her situation and asking him to give her a horse and buggy. Patrick O'Hearn brought them to her, with an extra horse tied on behind for him to ride home on. She asked him in for tea, and he accepted, for he smelled a rat in this business. It almost seemed as if Mr. Olney were up to something he shouldn't be. O'Hearn would not be loth to get to the bottom of it, for it was a point of pride with him to know what was going on on the underside of patrician life. Just offhand it seemed to O'Hearn that a man does not give a horse and buggy to a beautiful woman without due cause. And you had to remember that Mr. Olney was at the dangerous age—forty-five, or thereabouts.

As he blew on his tea to cool it, he thought that the size of his hostess's belly was a most interesting fact. But he felt his way cautiously, being a man of social finesse. "'Tis a nice place you have here, Mrs. McCarran."

"'Tis indeed, Mr. O'Hearn, and I'm proud to own it."

"I've been given to understand, Mrs. McCarran, that it's been in the Olney family better than two hundred years."

"Is that a fact now, Mr. O'Hearn?"

"Um. Was to go down to Mr. Lucian, I'm told."

"Belike with his new wife and all her money, 'twouldn't be grand enough for him." When Kitty talked to someone who spoke with the brogue, she fell back into it herself, unconsciously, although she was trying hard to overcome it.

He glanced at her obliquely. "I've an old friend in town, Mrs. Bridie McCarran, and I'm wondering now if you're connected."

"She's me aunt, that married me father's brother, Tim."

"Peace to his soul. Well now. Tim McCarran's niece! 'Twas on the

boat over I met Bridie, a fine girl in those days, before——” He tapped his head lightly. “Forty years ago we made the trip, and none of your fancy steamboats like nowadays. But I take it from your manner of speaking you’re not long away from Ireland yourself.”

Kitty told him she’d been in America six years, and about her father, his death, and her coming to Fall River. He let her chatter on, for the skeleton he had discovered in Mr. Olney’s closet was so startling that it rather shook him up. It was his nature to expect the worst, but this was the first time he’d actually found it. Kitty was loth to see him go, and she asked him to stop in any time he was in the neighbourhood. “I’ll do that now,” promised O’Hearn, for one could never be sure where developments would lead in a situation like this; though in a cause less worthy he’d have been as reluctant as any decent man to consort with a loose woman. Fortunately he was safely past the dangerous age.

Shortly after that Miss Bess came home, and the deserted house down the road woke briskly into life. The two houses were separated by a fallow field with a granite boulder in the middle of it, a brook, the remains of an ancient apple orchard, a low, stone wall, and a garden that now, in late fall, was an untidy mass of brown stalks enlivened only by a clump of bittersweet against the silvery wall of an old barn. Kitty’s house was on higher ground and closer to the road. From her back windows she saw the bedding of the other house go out on the line to air, and windows open with the white curtains blowing, and a dumpy woman chopping firewood in the yard. She looked respectable, not at all the kind who’d have to go to jail for some mysterious crime.

As Kitty was fixing her supper, Miss Bess knocked sharply on her door. When Kitty opened it, she said briskly, “’Evening, Miss McCarran. I should have come over sooner, but as you no doubt saw, I’ve been busy. Very bad to leave a house shut up so long. Well, are you comfortable here?”

Kitty was somewhat dazed by this assault. “Yes, ma’am, I am that.”

Miss Bess sat down on the kitchen settle, removing a crocheted fascinator from her head. She was about forty, short, plump, with alert brown eyes and red hair beginning to turn grey. It was wiry hair, dressed in a careless pompadour that stuck up above her forehead like a shaving brush. She wore shabby tweeds of mannish cut, an old sweater, and sensible shoes. She had a mother-hen quality about her, which, one might have thought, would have been unbecoming in a jail.

“I should have got here weeks ago,” she said. “Barnabas wrote me about you while I was still in jail in Boston. But that business about——”



"Did he tell you all about me now?" asked Kitty uneasily. "That—that I'm expecting and all?"

"Yes, I believe he did," said Silence casually. "It's no secret at this late date, is it?"

Kitty flushed and turned back to the stove, where she was frying mush.

"That smells wonderful," said Silence. "I wonder if you've enough to feed me. I haven't a thing in the house to eat."

"You mean you'd really *eat* with me, Miss Bess?" Then Kitty remembered Miss Bess was a jailbird, another outcast, and she was sorry she'd let herself sound so eager.

"Um. Why not? As I was saying, I had to go right down to Washington from Boston. Picketing the White House—you probably read about it in the papers."

Kitty never read a paper.

"Of course it was an utter fiasco. Might as well have stayed home." Silence laughed. "T.R. asked us in to tea! Not that he's really sympathetic—just clever and sly. But of course it knocked the props right out from under us. You can't demonstrate against a man after eating his *petit fours*, can you?"

"I suppose not," said Kitty vaguely. She had not the least idea what Miss Bess was talking about.

"So we just went on to New York and held a big rally in Union Square. I got thirty days as one of the ringleaders," she said, with immense satisfaction. "So it worked out all right in the end. Conditions in the New York jails are terrible—absolutely incredible. You wouldn't believe it if I were to tell you half of it."

Kitty stopped on her way to the pantry, "Miss Bess, you sound like you liked it. And I can't imagine a lady like yourself in the jails at all. Sure it's a benighted country now!"

"Oh, I can't say I exactly *like* it. But you know, it'd happen in Ireland, too, or any place else where the women had any gumption."

"Not in Ireland! They wouldn't put a lady in jail! Why, 'tis only for thieves and——"

"And anyone who gets in their way. I've done a total of two years and eleven days since I've been working for the Cause. Could always get out on bail, of course. But anyone who does is a deserter. They want us out on bail—beg us to take it and save them embarrassment, so of course we don't. The best publicity we have is on arrests. 'Senator's wife gets thirty days. Widow of banker refuses bail.' Can't expect the papers not to print that sort of thing."

"I don't understand it at all, and that's the truth."

"That's the trouble. All you girls think about is men and finery. No time for fundamentals. You realize you'll always be exploited till you get the vote, don't you?"

"Do you want tea or coffee, Miss Bess?"

"Coffee, please. When's your baby to be born, Miss McCarran?"

"February."

"Have you seen a doctor?"

"No, ma'am."

"You should. I'll think over what I know about them and see which one has the least wrong with him. And you shouldn't be here alone. You should have some girl——"

"Och, Miss Bess, who'd stay here with the likes of me?"

"Probably anyone you can pay. You have money?"

"That I have." Kitty set the food on the table. "But it won't bring back my reputation, Miss Bess."

"No. But it does make the path of sin a little less rugged. Oh, how did you ever get into such a mess?"

"Didn't Mr. Olney tell you about it, now?"

"No. He merely said you'd had an unfortunate experience."

"I—I loved a man," said Kitty softly.

"Well, thank God that's one tribulation I've been spared," said Silence Bess, and she went back to talking about the Cause and jails, tactfully avoiding her other passion: the unwed mothers.

## 6

Mr. Patrick O'Hearn sat in Mrs. Bridie McCarran's kitchen while she plied him with tea and scones in a fluttering of social responsibility that left her nearly breathless. True, it was a year since she had invited him to call, but his reluctance did not cause her to suspect he might be after something now. Whatever her mental deficiencies, Bridie McCarran was utterly without guile.

"Now do have a scone, Mr. O'Hearn. I baked them meself not an hour ago. And how's Mrs. O'Hearn finding herself these days?"

"These are delicious, Mrs. McCarran. Why, Mrs. O'Hearn's as well as can be expected, considering the festivities attendant upon the return of Mr. and Mrs. Lucian Olney from Europe. A fine couple they make, very loving. 'Tis edifying to see them so happy."

"Indeed, Mr. O'Hearn, I've often thought if ever a marriage was

made in Heaven, 'twas that one. I've never had the pleasure of the young Mrs. Olney's acquaintance, but with Mr. Lucian being the kind, considerate gentleman he is, they couldn't be otherwise than happy. When my niece Kitty had her broken bone last winter, which maybe you hadn't heard about, Mr. O'Hearn, but 'twas a terrible thing, Mr. Lucian was the soul of kindness, and although of course 'twas Mr. Barnabas himself sent the food and things, and made Mr. Lucian come frequently to inquire, you'd never guess from Mr. Lucian it was a burden to him. He was that considerate, exactly like his father, though not near so unbending, you'd never guess but he was as concerned about Kitty as Mr. Barnabas himself, though 'tis plain there must have been many times when giving up his dinner hour worked a hardship on him."

"Um. May I trouble you for a bit of milk, Mrs. McCarran? I dropped in partly to tell you that I had the pleasure of meeting your niece, and a regular beauty she is, too."

The ready tears of gratitude swam in Bridie's blue eyes. "Oh, Mr. O'Hearn! To think you'd go to all that trouble to do me a kindness, it touches me heart. If only you knew how many's the time I've fretted meself to sleep worrying over Kitty and what's become of her, and I daren't ask around here, for the calling of her name's enough to send Rosie into a spasm. Not that I blame the poor girl for avoiding us, after the way Rosie treated her and told her to get out, but all the same 'tis a hardship when you're my age to have a sweet, pretty thing like her kiss me and walk out of me life, and never a word from her since. Now where did you see her, Mr. O'Hearn, and is the child well and getting enough to eat and working steady?"

"She's well enough," said Mr. O'Hearn, helping himself to another scone. "And perhaps why you don't hear from her is she's living in the country, on a farm rightly belonging to Mr. Olney. Only recently I took a horse and buggy to her at his special request."

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, what's she doing on Mr. Olney's farm, and with a horse and buggy, too?" Then a light of relief broke over her withered face. "Ah now, she's taken my advice, bless her, and gone to work out, and naturally, seeing how kind he was to her when her bone was broken, she'd go to Mr. Olney, and of course he put her on the farm to watch over it. Now isn't that how you see it, Mr. O'Hearn?"

"I'm afraid it is not, Mrs. McCarran." He hesitated, prolonging the enjoyable anticipation of the effect of his shocking news. "'Tis not easy to discuss with a lady like yourself, Mrs. McCarran, but seeing we

are both of an age where such a thing might not be held against us, and furthermore seeing we came here on the same boat across the water, I'll put the matter as delicate as I can, trusting your refinement to discern I mean no harm by it, for 'tis only circumstances being what they are that forces me to mention the unmentionable. In plain words, Mrs. McCarran, your niece is expecting, and, from the look of her, I'd say soon."

Bridie's reaction was unexpected. She beamed at him, exclaiming, "She went and married him in secret now, may the saints be praised!"

"'Tis a hard thing to bear ill tidings, and to an old friend like yourself, Mrs. McCarran, but Mr. Olney said to me, 'Take the horse and buggy to the old farm on the Freetown Road, O'Hearn, and give them to a Miss Kitty McCarran you'll find in the house.' His very words, identical to the breath, and I ask you, would he say Miss of a married woman? Now mind, seeing she's your niece, I'd give her every benefit of the doubt, but also, I saw no evidence of a man about the place."

Bridie's eyes lost their brightness and took on a vague, harried look. "Belike he was working," she said dully, remembering Rosie's accusations.

"Where's the point to deceive ourselves?" said O'Hearn. "She's in trouble, and Mr. Olney's taking care of her."

"Well, he's a kind man, but if she's like you say, 'tisn't likely he'd —no, 'twouldn't be decent, Mr. O'Hearn. Likely her husband's just away on a little trip." She looked at him, her eyes pleading for the clemency of lies. "You've seen her yourself, and how pretty she is, and sure now it's plain no man would have the heart to leave her, and her with a face like that!"

"These things happen," said O'Hearn, rising and picking up his hat. "Couldn't it be he's already married? And perhaps, in a sense, he didn't leave her, Mrs. McCarran, for 'tis the truth she seems to be very well off, what with the old Olney farm *and* a horse and buggy. Well, make what you can of it, and we'll hope our fears are unfounded. But I saw what I saw, and I stopped to tell you of it in the line of duty, you might say, remembering our old friendship. And I thank you for your hospitality, Mrs. McCarran."

She showed him to the door, showering him with wistful politenesses, serving the amenities with fidelity even under the stress of worry and disgrace. When she was alone she sat down by the window and watched the dusk steal over the mill across the street. As the

darkness deepened, her worry about Kitty grew vague, and finally it lost all poignancy and meaning as her mind took up the business at hand, forcing her to begin once again to wait and listen for the steps of the dead upon the stairs.

The case was otherwise with Mr. O'Hearn, who had found what he had come to find: that Mr. Olney had previously been involved with Kitty McCarran. He crossed to the millyard and climbed into the carriage to wait for Mr. Olney. Since he had nothing else to do, and the subject was engrossing, he began busily putting two and two together, an activity which always primed his tongue for future chatter. It was not long after Patrick O'Hearn's meditations in the millyard that hell began for Barnabas Olney.

7

Lucian returned from Europe shortly before Christmas. He walked into the office while Barnabas was talking on the telephone to the grocer, placing his annual order for the Christmas baskets. "Still playing ministering angel to the great unwashed, eh? Honestly, father, don't you think it's a bit medieval?"

"Why do you hate the unfortunate, Lucian?"

"Oh, I don't hate them. I'm just not sure the mill's Christmas present isn't an annual bellyache. This business of playing pater familias to a thousand hands——" He shrugged. "After all, they don't *like* it, you know."

"They've never said they dislike it," said Barnabas drily.

"It damages their self-respect, though. What this country needs is a labouring class that can stand on its own feet and give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. The way they do in Europe."

With a black scowl Barnabas faced him. "What do you know of a girl named Kitty McCarran?"

Lucian's light smile froze. For a second Barnabas saw him unmasked. Then Lucian recovered and said carelessly, "Should I know something of her?"

"No more lies, Lucian. I've provided for her, since you weren't here to do it. Now I want to know what amends——"

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about."

"Lucian! The girl is soon to bear your child!"

"Are you sure it's mine? After all, when a woman——"

"I'll have none of that talk. If the guilt is yours, take it, and at least relieve me of the burden."

Lucian sat down on the edge of the desk, nonchalantly swinging one foot. He had never seen Barnabas really angry, and he had no fear but that he'd be able to handle this situation, to extricate himself from it. In an abstract way, he knew that Barnabas was sternly moral. But he did not for one moment believe that Barnabas would run this unpleasant quality into the ground. He'd come around in time because Lucian was his son and Kitty McCarran was merely a chippy. "You're exaggerating, Father. The girl's no better than she should be. But she's shrewd, like so many of those people. And—excuse my frankness—you shouldn't allow her to blackmail you."

"Lucian, have you no sense of the *meaning* of what you've done?"

"Why read meaning into everything? It was just an ordinary little affair. And she wasn't reluctant. She had only to look in a mirror to discover that there are easier ways to earn a living than working in a mill. She simply decided to tread the primrose path. Let's be realistic for a change, shall we? Some women are born whores, so——"

Barnabas turned on him. "Don't use that language in front of me! I don't like it! Can't you understand what you've done? That by a light, selfish act you've warped the whole life of another person? Do you think you're God, to play with people? And what about your child? Are you——"

"Father, don't be naïve. You know that a little bastard's papa is every man his mother ever knew."

Such a vast betrayal of integrity scarcely left room in Barnabas for anger. What he felt was grief, as if he witnessed Lucian's death and stood by powerless to stop it. Horror mingled with the grief: he was watching his son turn into a monster, a monster whom he still loved. And the horror was the more terrible because to look at Lucian was like looking at himself. In Lucian he confronted the Faust in himself, the soulless twin, the shadow. He said softly, "Lucian, what amends will you make this girl for the wrong you did her?"

"Be reasonable, Father. Anything I did would only make a public scandal and hurt a dozen innocent people. You might survive, but how about Adelaide and mother and the Pughs? You're not being practical—but then, you religious people never are. And what sort of amends could I make? Divorce Adelaide and marry Kitty?"

"If you think that would be right."

"Be hard on Adelaide, wouldn't it? She's going to have a baby,

too, and I'm reasonably sure it's mine. Look, I'm sorry the thing turned out as it did—matter of fact, I had some pretty wretched moments over it. But it's done, and it can't be undone. I'll pay you back the money you've given her, and we'll ship her off some place, maybe set her up in a little business. I'll run up to Boston and see if——”

“There's more to this than you seem to realize. You've cast a stone into a pool, and the waves spread out. There's more to concern us than the girl.”

“What more? If we get rid of her——”

“We can't get rid of ourselves. I think now, Lucian, that you are wicked. Yet it may be many years before I cease to love you. You are still my son. I will have to work this out as best I can, by myself. I think it will be easier if I do not have to see much of you. I cannot work beside you, with this thing between us. I cannot have you in my house and in my life. So if you will, please go now. And do not come back.”

The bright charm vanished from Lucian's face, leaving it flaccid, momentarily stupid. “But look here, you can't do that! I'm not exactly one of the hired help. This mill is as much mine as it is yours—it's the *Olney* mill. This business of cutting off with a shilling can be anti-climactic—if you happen to have only one son.”

Barnabas refrained from mentioning again the grandchild he would soon have—Lucian's extravagant and unwanted gift. “This company belongs to its stockholders, Lucian. You may have it any time if you will buy more than half its stock. Now will you please go?”

Lucian went, slamming the door after himself. He whistled as he ran lightly down the stairs: the face-saving, light-hearted whistle for the ears of the help. Not that Lucian was really worried. His father would get over this in a few days, and if he didn't, something else would turn up. It was hardly possible that Kitty McCarran, reaching up from the depths, could have any important or lasting effect upon Lucian's life.

Barnabas stood at his window looking down into the millyard, untidy with clots of dirty snow, stray puffs of sodden cotton, and the trail of coal dust from the gate to the engine room, a black gash like a mourning band worn on a ragged filthy sleeve.

In spite of the raw December weather, Lucian walked home to the modest cottage in the Highlands which his father had given him and Adelaide for a wedding present. It was a long walk. Nevertheless, when he entered his sitting-room, where Adelaide was working at her interminable embroidery, she looked up, surprised. "You're early, Lucian. Did something happen?" Adelaide never expected anything good to happen: any minor break in routine always presaged disaster, and always, when she asked if something had happened, she meant something unwelcome.

Lucian kissed her lightly. His caress made her blush. She had never got used to his kisses—she never felt worthy of them. To her, Lucian was still a sort of god who condescended to be kind to her. He said, "Always worrying ahead of time, aren't you? Wait till I get some sherry, and I'll tell you about it." He started for the dining-room, still not knowing what he would tell her.

"It's in the decanter with the silver top," she said.

He knew that because he had put it there himself. One of the most irritating things about Adelaide was her habit of telling him things he already knew. He called, "Will you have a glass with me?"

"Oh, Lucian, I don't know if I should, in my——" He could no longer see her, but he knew she was blushing. She found pregnancy an embarrassing condition, and even though her figure showed no signs of it yet, she had already gone into retirement.

"Nonsense! It'll do you good."

He brought the decanter and glasses and poured the wine. She licked her lips nervously, waiting for the bad news.

He sipped his wine. "Adelaide, I—well, it's no use beating about the bush. I had a little argument with Father, and the upshot was, I told him I was quitting the mill."

Adelaide had a silly gesture of which she was unconscious, but which she always used in a crisis: her hands would flutter and come to rest, meekly folded, over her heart. Perhaps she had learned this, along with other platitudinous gestures, during her elocution lessons. It irritated Lucian, who managed to read into it the sum of her ineptitudes. "Oh, Lucian!"

"Now, Adelaide! I admit I was impulsive, but you know whenever I act on impulse it always turns out right. A job like that—let's admit the truth for a change. It's just a spot to stick the owner's son—a place



where he can't do any harm because he's not allowed to do anything, but where he'll be handy in case anything happens to the old man. It's no kind of existence for a man with brains."

She accepted his rationalization at face value. Nevertheless, the job was something he'd had, something secure, and now he'd lost it. That was bad. "But Lucian, what did you quarrel about? Your father's so—so quiet, and he never argues with anybody."

"That's the whole trouble. He's so quiet he's rotting, and the business is rotting with him. Why, he runs the mill as if conditions hadn't changed in fifty years! Of course, he can get away with it. He's Barnabas Olney. But——"

Adelaide, always literal minded, asked in a worried tone, "Is he going broke? Papa says——"

"He's a long way from broke. But times are good now. Besides, even if he keeps the mill going forever, what's in it for me?"

"Why Lucian! You'd inherit it!"

Lucian shrugged. "That'll happen anyhow. But he won't give up till he's eighty, if then, and I can spend the best years of my life being an office boy. Why, most men lucky enough to be born into the managerial class are mill treasurers by the time they're my age!"

"I suppose you know best, Lucian. But—well, what else can you do? If you worked for Papa it'd be the same, wouldn't it?"

Mentally Lucian ran over the list of men who were the treasurers and superintendents of Ezra Pugh's mills, and he realized that Adelaide was right. They were the only two jobs in a mill worth having. They were the plums, and in Ezra's mills they were always given to the men who helped Ezra get control of the mills. "I didn't have in mind working for your father. Nor for anyone else."

"But Lucian! It isn't *decent* not to work!"

He laughed. "What's to stop me building a mill of my own?"

Again her hands fluttered and came to rest meekly crossed over her heart. That he could do it—do anything—she had no doubt. Yet the probable consequences of such daring filled her with dread. "But it costs millions, Lucian. Papa says——"

"To he—— I mean, bother what Papa says!" He was suddenly ecstatically happy. From the groping darkness of lies and indecision this beautiful idea had come to him, releasing him from the domination of both his father and Ezra Pugh. This was the first purely happy moment of his life, the moment in which he felt his fate, light and clear, to be completely at his disposal. "Look, you have a hundred thousand in mill shares, and I have a few shares of this and that, too. It's plenty!

I'll take it to the bank, and by tomorrow night I'll have five times that subscribed in our own stock. And this time next year we'll be millionaires. What do you bet?"

"But shouldn't we talk to Papa first? Shouldn't we——"

"We'll talk to *nobody*! This is strictly on our own. I'll go see Waley and have him make an estimate on the buildings and sound him out about good sites, then——"

"Mr. Waley built Papa's last mill, and it cost——"

"Stock, darling. Waley always takes stock in the mills he builds. Say, you know, we have an old farm out on the Freetown Road that would make a good mill site. I wonder—no, with Father gone sour on me——. Still, perhaps Mother could talk him into selling it—find somebody to buy it for me so he wouldn't know. I'll have to run out and look at it. Then——"

"But the machinery! Papa says——"

"Your Papa never paid a cent for machinery, any more than anyone else did. Those machine people always take stock. After all, Fall River mill stock is as sound as government bonds. Why, we have ten times more money than we need! Maybe we won't have to sell any stock outright—just write it to pay for the buildings and machines. All we really need is enough to buy our first load of cotton and meet our first payroll. So you just tend to your embroidery and let me run the business end of this family."

"Yes, Lucian. But perhaps if we speak to Papa——"

"Don't you dare! Nor to anyone until it's all settled. When a rumour gets out about a new mill, everyone wants a cut on it. So don't say anything. Not even to your mother."

"All right, Lucian. But it doesn't seem right not to——"

"Now, now! Lucian knows best!"

She looked at him with adoration. "Yes, Lucian. Of course you do."

Although Lucian swore everyone to secrecy, the news of his venture was all over town by Christmas Eve. There was nothing Fall River found so exciting as a new mill. That year Amy Olney served Christmas dinner to thirty-five people: the Olney family, including its near-by poor relations, and, in deference to Adelaide, the Pughs. Lucian, despite the rift with his father, could hardly remain away. As they steadily ate their way through twelve courses, nobody—except Silence

Bess and Barnabas—thought anything except the new mill was worth talking about.

Ezra Pugh announced over the oysters, "I'm offended, my boy, that you didn't come to me first. If it weren't for the—er—spirit of Christmas, I'd take you to task."

Lucian laughed. "You've the misfortune to be in the family now, sir. And the first thing I decided was to do this strictly on my own. Being born with the proverbial silver spoon is bad enough without having your epitaph read, 'Here lies one who pulled himself up by his father-in-law's bootstraps.'"

They fired questions at him, the women asking as many as the men. How many spindles? Did he realize the taxes were unbearable? Where was his site? To buy an old mill, if he could find one, would be cheaper than building. Had he made arrangements for his water? Finally, during a lull, Barnabas asked, "What are you planning to make, Lucian?"

"Oh, print cloth to start with."

"Always safe," said Ezra Pugh.

Barnabas said, "I was over at the Print Works the other day, and they told me they can buy cloth in Georgia and have it shipped here for half a cent a yard less than they can buy it in Fall River."

"Those Southern mills can't last," said Lucian. "They just don't have the know-how."

Pugh said, "It's their wage differential. There's nothing wrong here that a wage cut won't cure. It's these damned—oh, excuse me, ladies—these blasted unions, don't know what side their bread's buttered on. Nine dollars a week for an eight-loom weaver! And now they want a fifty-four hour week on top of it!"

Amy Olney, who was dressed in grey silk like a plump, sleek, mourning dove, said, "All that money isn't good for these immigrants, especially the Irish and Portuguese. They just spend it on drink, what the priests and nuns don't get out of them, that is, and then they go around in rags. Of course, doing charity work, I see a different aspect from the one you men see, but it's perfectly plain that when you have a lot of people who are really nothing but children, and with no sense of responsibility, you really owe it to them to protect them from things like that. They simply don't have the stability and good practical sense our English and Scottish workers used to have when I was a girl."

Grace Pugh nodded her aigrettes. She hoisted a bit of turkey up delicately over her bosom encased in plum-coloured velvet. Silence Bess watched fascinated, for the margin of safety was narrow, but

Grace made it. "I sometimes think the only solution is to give the hands adequate food and shelter, the way people did in the old days, and maybe a little spending money every week. That way we wouldn't have to cope with all those drunken men on Saturday night, and those poor girls on the street, and—well——"

"Cost a fortune to build housing for them all," growled Pugh. "Stock holders 'd never stand for it. We'll just have to work a little harder to get that da—er—that sixty-hour law repealed, and all that child-labour nonsense. An honest seventy-two hours' work a week never hurt anybody, man, woman, or child! When the government starts pampering a bunch of immigrants, it's the beginning of the end. Because business is what made this country great, and business is the *only* thing that made it great! So once you start discriminating against business——"

A soothing voice interrupted. It belonged to a remote Olney cousin, a banker. "I've reason to believe, sir, that the sixty-hour law is unconstitutional. It strikes at the very root of individual liberty, telling a man how many hours a day he can work."

"Oh," said Silence Bess drily, "I thought it only told him how many hours you could make him work."

Amy Olney, the protective hostess, was instantly on guard. "Well, Lucian dear, I certainly hope they repeal it before you get started. It would make things so much pleasanter for you."

Barnabas said, "But you'll have a great advantage over us anyhow. Buying new equipment, you can get automatic looms and make one weaver do the work of eight."

"Oh, I don't think I'll bother with automatics."

"Why not?"

Ezra Pugh broke in. "The boy's right. Those things are no good, too fussy. Always breaking down, so what you save in weavers you pay out for in loom-fixers. Let the South have 'em. They'll find out you can't get quality from automatics, whatever you can get in yardage. No, what we need here is a decent wage cut, and not a lot of flubbedy-dub machinery that'll never in this world pay for its cost."

"That's right," said Lucian. "Any good accountant can tell you men are cheaper than machines."

"Really?" said Barnabas. "Then come around to the mill tomorrow. I've a thousand good non-automatic looms I'd be happy to sell you."

"Thanks," said Lucian, "but I don't think it's sound policy to start out with second-hand machinery. A loom ought to be good for the life of the mill."

Ezra Pugh launched into a monologue on why the unions would ultimately fail: they were trying to control the labour market, and thus to set at nought the law of supply and demand, which God Himself could not violate without disastrous consequences. Barnabas, who had heard it all many times before, withdrew into himself, thinking about Lucian and the probable financial disaster for which he was headed. But perhaps he was being unduly pessimistic: with a good superintendent a mill could stay in business for a long while.

10

When Lucian discovered that his father had given the old Olney farm to Kitty McCarran, his first reaction was anger. But further consideration showed him that it was perhaps a rather lucky turn of events. His father was entirely too shrewd at a bargain. Kitty was a fool.

He went to his lawyer, Bailey Philpott, and presented his needs. Mr. Philpott, at forty, had everything that mattered, and everything he possessed had a cash value which Mr. Philpott knew to the penny. Even his wife had a cash value, as did all his relatives who were still above ground. Those deceased had paid up—Mr. Philpott knew how much to the last chattel and the final inch of land. If they hadn't paid to him directly, they had paid to someone from whom it might eventually accrue to Mr. Philpott if due care were taken. The Philpott carefulness made people with money trust him. People without money did not exist for Mr. Philpott.

He knew the law, as it concerned money, backwards and forwards. He had acquired his knowledge through years of plodding patience, by the light of an intelligence that glimmered like a weak but dependable candle, from sheer love of the subject. Lucian regarded him not as a simpleton, but as a shrewd man with a mentality of sombre brilliance: he accepted the town's estimate of the lawyer. Just how this general misapprehension had arisen would be difficult to explain: perhaps his pomposity so awed people that they felt certain he'd end up a judge, or even a senator.

He listened with heavy care to Lucian's story, making notes whenever property and money were mentioned. "How much are you willing to pay for the land, excepting the house, immediate yards, and outbuildings?"

"A few hundred dollars. Or a few shares of stock if you can talk her into that."

"The stock may end up with a greater cash value than the land."

"Um. Point is, though, it doesn't cost me anything now."

"Yes. Very sound point, that. Er—curious thing, this immigrant girl in possession of the old Olney farm. Wonder how she got the money to——"

"Oh," said Lucian lightly, "my father gave it to her."

Mr. Philpott was profoundly shocked. "But—a valuable property—er—really now, it's hardly reasonable! I grant in money matters your father's a bit childlike, but still and all, no man in his right mind would——"

"I'm sure he had a good reason." Lucian smiled enigmatically as he stood up. "I mustn't take up too much of your time. You run over and have a little talk with her. But don't mention my name. If she knows it's wanted for a mill she'll hold out for too much. Pretend you want it yourself."

"I understand."

The mills of Mr. Philpott, like those of the gods, ground slowly. It took time to look up deeds, estimate land values, consider taxes and water rights. While the mills were grinding, Mr. Philpott now and then brought the stony weight of his intellect to bear upon the mystery of a man giving away a valuable property to a nobody. The problem rested, leaden in his mind like a serving of indigestible pudding. Truly a shocking thing. A monstrous, immoral thing. It outraged him. It was such wanton acts that undermined the foundations of society, struck at the very roots of the substance of existence. He gradually came to feel a dull and all-pervasive dread and loathing of Barnabas Olney, the perpetrator of this heinous deed. It was the righteous shrinking of the faithful from the heretic.

In due time, however, he felt ready to call upon Miss McCarran. Early in February he knocked upon her door, and he was startled when, after a long wait, it was opened by Silence Bess. "Oh. Good afternoon, Silence. I'd like to speak to Miss McCarran."

Silence had no illusions about Bailey Philpott: she knew every barren rock in the desert of his mind. "You can't. She's busy."

"But it's a matter of property. I wrote to advise her that I was coming at precisely this time."

"Well, you can't see her. Something more important has come up."

"That's not possible, Silence. This may mean a fortune to the young lady. Now if you'll explain to her I——"

"Come back in a couple of weeks, Bailey." Silence started to close the door.

"Now just a minute, Silence. I'm a busy man. I can't——"

"Well, Miss McCarran's a busy woman. And right now she's having a baby."

Mr. Philpott fled, fulminating, computing the cash value of the time he had lost. He should have foreseen it—the lower elements had a distressing aptitude for creating sordid situations. But a *Miss McCarran* having a baby! Really—— Then an unheard-of, a never-before-experienced event befell Mr. Philpott: he had an inspiration. A blinding light suffused his mind. The pieces of the puzzle fell together. Two and two met, and they added up. Barnabas Olney was keeping the woman, paying in property, chattels, and cash the due value for favours received. And the child which so inconvenienced Mr. Philpott was the fruit of their sin.

## II

It was some time before Barnabas began to notice peculiarities in people's behaviour toward him. When he had occasion to go through the mill, old hands like Mrs. Sankey would stare at him as if they found something novel and compelling in his appearance. Twice when he passed old Mrs. Cowan in the street she cut him dead, which led him to conclude that her sight must be failing; until Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Thurber, and Mrs. Judd did likewise. Not even one so charitable as Barnabas could suppose the entire female population was going blind.

A subtle change came over the manners of the brokers. Their customary respect for Barnabas became tinged with informality which grew more marked as time passed, although Barnabas failed to see that he did anything to encourage it. They began telling him stories about travelling salesmen, and about people named Pat and Mike, Abie and Rachel, Rastus and Mandy. Of course Barnabas, like everyone else, realized that the manners of a statelier day had gone into a decline, but he thought it odd that they had taken such a sudden turn for the worse, reaching a crisis practically overnight, as it were. Then the broker from the South asked him to a party in New Bedford; and the only excuse Barnabas could find for this strange breach was that the man had perhaps not lived in Fall River long enough to learn the caste system that prevailed there.

Yet all his charity and excuses for the sudden marked peculiarities in the behaviour of people could not blind Barnabas to the growing coolness he observed every time he went to Quaker Meetings. Barnabas was not a birthright Quaker. Except for some relatives on his

mother's side, like old Salvation Bess who'd joined the Quakers out of sheer stubbornness to be different, Barnabas's forebears had all been right-thinking Puritans. But as they'd grown richer, their faith had grown colder. Barnabas's father had had only a mild, Sunday morning interest in God, although he had always been able, in a pinch, to quote Scripture to prove that the poor we have always with us, and anyhow they are Blessed, for in some other world they shall have bread. This take it or leave it relationship with his Maker should have satisfied Barnabas: he was in a much more secure financial position than his father had ever been. But he was innately religious, and he felt a pinching of the soul each time he partook of the meagre fare he was offered. He found a stale-bread flavour in this construction of God in the image of the cotton manufacturer. He had been about to give up the whole farce when Cousin Silence interested him in the work of the Society of Friends. Acceptance of their faith had grown out of his preoccupation with their charity.

Even so, he never made a fetish of church-going. He went to Meeting when he felt the need of it. No one criticised his lax attendance, however, because there was no doubt of his piety. Also he paid more than his share of the expenses of the local Meeting, which was important now when both the Fall River and Freetown congregations were slowly dying because people preferred easier and more fashionable faiths.

There was a limit to their tolerance, however. By the middle of March, 1903, it was apparent to Barnabas that no one cared to linger after Meeting to talk with him. In April he went to hear a man lecture on the need for prison reform; and the only person who spoke to him was Silence Bess. He drove her home, and she gave him news of Kitty McCarran and her child, a fine boy. "Though much good health and beauty will do him," said Silence, "when every busybody in town will crucify him for being a bastard."

"It's a sad case. But she doesn't lack for anything, does she?"

"Only a husband. In a way, she's her own worst enemy. She takes a gruesome delight in brooding over her sin, as she calls it. Perhaps that's the Irish Catholic nature. Can't say, since she's the first of that immigrant lot I've ever really known personally. But it's very unwholesome. Granted a brutal society is going to extract its pound of flesh—still—she's only twenty-two, with a lifetime ahead of her. She should get interested in something like Suffrage. Take her out of herself. How well do you know her, Barnabas?"

"I don't really know her at all."



"Um. Well, how does she impress you?"

Barnabas could not admit that Kitty inspired physical revulsion in him. "Why, I hardly know. She was always upset when I saw her, and her foreignness intrudes upon me. I really don't understand these new people we're getting. There's a cringing quality about them that I simply do not like."

"Environment," said Silence. "Poverty makes people cringe. And then they've been taught all their lives to cringe before that dreadful Church. But you seem to feel responsible for her."

"I couldn't say this to anyone else, Silence, but perhaps it is an evil system we operate that takes women and children from their homes. We've stolen their privileges and given them instead a spool of thread to wind. It is not enough."

"No. Some day you men will have to learn that when you take away privileges, you have to confer rights in exchange. Women won't put up with exploitation forever. Perhaps there'll even come a day when a case like this girl's will be impossible. I feel sorry for her, Barnabas, but, you know, I don't quite like her. A rather unwholesome character, I feel—quite aside from what's happened to her, I mean. But perhaps I'm wrong. It may be just another case of an unwholesome society pressing its dead weight of hypocrisy against a person not quite strong enough to resist."

"But her Church has taught her always to obey, Silence, never to defy. And few of us are strong enough to resist society."

"Well, perhaps some day she'll get it through her head that for one like her attack is the only defence. She's quite intelligent, you know. Bailey Philpott is trying to buy some land from her for Lucian's new mill, and she's driving him crazy with her haggling. When it comes to money she's sharp as a cat with its back up."

"What is Bailey offering her?"

"Shares, of course. I told her to take cash or nothing, because I've a strong hunch that mill won't last long."

"Oh? Why do you feel that?"

"Frankly, Barnabas, what does Lucian know about running a mill?"

"What does Ezra Pugh know about it? He's made a fortune all the same."

"Don't mention that rat to me. He survives by driving people like my father to the wall. I don't think Lucian is that dishonest."

"Did you mention to Miss McCarran that it's Lucian who wants the land?"

"I think so. Why?"

"I merely wondered. I'll go talk to her about it. Meantime don't let her sign any of Bailey's cut-throat papers."

Barnabas was secretly glad of this excuse to see his grandson. He looked at the baby, feeling no sense of consanguinity: perhaps because the child had been named Rafael, which was so outlandish as to make anyone concerned for his welfare highly dubious. He was a handsome baby, but still too young, thought Barnabas uneasily, for anyone to determine whom he might resemble.

"Why did you name him Rafael? Is it from some book you read?"

"'Twas my father's name. He was an awful heretic, Mr. Olney, so he won't hold it against me, rest his soul. And I've a feeling he'd be so fond of the baby he wouldn't hold it against *him* where he came from, and that can't be said for many people, I'm sure."

"He's a fine baby. You should be proud of him."

Kitty flushed. "I love him, Mr. Olney. Who could help it? But proud——"

"I've really come on business," he said hastily. "I understand Mr. Philpott wants to buy land from you."

"Yes, sir. And to tell you the truth, I can't bear the sight of the man."

"That may be a good thing, for he drives a hard bargain. But you can't sell the land because you hold it in trust for your son. Or did you forget?"

"No, sir. But I tell him I won't sell, and the next thing, he offers me more shares. What can I do?"

"I've drawn up a paper for you. You may rent them five acres for a cash payment of one thousand dollars per year. If they want to use the pond and brook, they must pay another thousand. If they default on their rents for one year, the mill buildings revert to your ownership. This is a land rent arrangement with the buildings for security. Mr. Philpott won't like these terms, but you'd be foolish to accept less. It is noisy and unpleasant to have a mill on one's property."

She took the paper and read it through twice, slowly. "It's a vast sum of money." She spoke with awe, smiling, and losing her vaguely hang-dog air of martyrdom. It crossed her mind that probably Mr. Olney didn't know that Lucian was wanting the land; and she would not tell him lest he do something to cause the new wealth to vanish.

"It's hardly enough, when one thinks of the nuisance it will be. But I'm sure it's all they'll pay."

He stayed and had tea with Kitty out of courtesy. This was unfortunate because it delayed him just long enough so that, when he finally

crossed the yard to his carriage, he encountered Bailey Philpott stepping down from his. They exchanged a brief greeting. And Mr. Philpott enjoyed the rare happiness of acquiring incontestable proof of his revelation, which made the whole thing, now and forever, as plain as the nose on your face.

By the standards of 1903 (and still more by those of 1878, when she had married) Amy Olney was a good wife. Her one fault was that in spite of her sweetly maternal, pouter-pigeon look, she had not proved very fertile. Although naturally one did not discuss such things openly, one could feel secretly that a really ideal wife might have tried a little harder, a little more frequently. It was so sad to think of the vast Olney fortune hanging on the slender thread of Lucian's life, though of course he *seemed* strong enough. But the Lord gave and the Lord took away, and the way things happened, one simply could never tell; therefore it was to be hoped that Adelaide would prove more productive.

This failure in her primary duty was more Amy's misfortune than her fault, however. In the things over which she had more control, she was ideal. She was always sweet to everyone, and she was active in all the affairs of the Congregational Church—she had not followed Barnabas into Quakerism, finding it too drab. She never expressed an opinion at variance with the general consensus of her circle. She dressed with a comfortable, middle-aged dowdiness, her figure resembling a lumpy mealsack decently corseted. She was never guilty of curiosity about masculine affairs. And she had no pretensions to any sort of learning.

Her taste also was impeccable. In art she knew what she liked: pictures of young animals, especially kittens, and young children doing cute things; and, on a really high plane, Venice. She thought Hall Caine a very shocking author who should not be kept in houses where there were young people. She loved the theatre and patronized the Academy of Music with unfailing ardour, although Barnabas would only go when it was Shakespeare or someone like Kubelik or Patti. Amy thought Shakespeare was much better when bits of him were recited in somebody's drawing-room after a good solid meal—and really Adelaide did every bit as well as Ellen Terry with "The quality of mercy". She preferred her music the same way, and she felt if some of the hard pieces, like Chopin, were too long, people ought to cut out

the repeats. Songs like "Old Black Joe" and "The Minstrel Boy to the War Has Gone" moved her to tears; but she didn't think the Gilbert and Sullivan things were a bit funny, and she couldn't understand why Barnabas did. She didn't think Mark Twain was funny either. She felt that it was unladylike for the weaker sex to read Mr. Dooley, which Barnabas found so hilarious, because it was all about politics. She liked to read about the British royal family in the papers, and when the old Queen died, she felt bereaved, although Edward VII was certainly all anyone could desire in a king. The Russian, German, and Spanish royal families were also interesting—indeed, any royal family fascinated her. Before she fell in love with Barnabas (at seventeen) she had quite seriously considered marrying a duke—in her imagination, of course.

She had numerous talents. She sewed beautifully, and much of her life had passed while she embroidered silk flowers on tan linen pillow covers, table scarves, and centre pieces. Of late she'd taken up battenburg, though it was hard on her eyes; and since she'd known Adelaide was expecting, she'd been working on baby dresses. She knew how to make an excellent sponge cake, a fine old-fashioned plum pudding, and wonderful carrot marmalade, but she was chary of giving the rules for them to other women. They were her specialities, after all. She got along beautifully with servants. She took an almost sinful pride in her ability as a nurse. No illness daunted her. She knew a dozen remedies, all vile or painful, for everything, and she administered them all in double doses. Even when ill herself she did not shirk her duty, but bravely swallowed some of everything in the medicine chest.

Any crisis, provided it happened to someone else, brought out the best in her. She would drop everything to participate in a vigil over the dying, to be on hand at a confinement, to comfort the bereaved before, after, and during a funeral, to aid those injured in a mill fire, or to set up a soup kitchen during bad times. Her greatest joy was to feel that she was needed.

She wallowed daily in contentment, for she held unswervingly to the most complacent of faiths: that all ages previous to the one which had begot her and hers were dark and benighted; but now light had finally come, never to be dimmed, and now, perfection having been attained, there would be no more change. She flourished in this happy coma until, on an afternoon in the summer of 1903, Grace Pugh called upon her.

The day of doom had begun peacefully with a good, solid breakfast,

a trip to the store (the grocery at Westport Harbor was so quaint), a visit (with a jar of marmalade) to poor old Mrs. Harvey who'd broken her hip. Then a satisfying lunch and the customary Saturday telephone call from Barnabas, asking if she wanted him to bring anything from town. Then the excitement of Lucian driving up in his new Stanley Steamer, really a very dangerous contraption, though he probably did need it with all the running around he had to do about the new mill. When Grace called at three o'clock Amy had no reason to suppose there was any *motive* behind the visit, although she couldn't help noticing right away that Grace seemed distraught.

Amy expressed disappointment that Adelaide hadn't come, too.

"Well, really, Amy, she does show, and Ezra took the carriage to go to New Bedford, and in her condition she certainly can't ride in that machine of Lucian's, so——"

"But, Grace, nobody cares here at the Harbor."

"Perhaps not, but she's terribly self-conscious about it, and besides, I came especially to talk to you. Can we go up to your room where we'll be private?" Grace firmly led the way, ploughing up the stairs, a billowing wake of pongee ruffles flowing behind her. Meekly Amy trotted after her.

When the door was shut, Grace sat on a straight chair, her back rigid, her manner portentous. Amy pulled off her shoes, which always hurt her plump little feet, and sat on the edge of the bed. "I do hope nobody's in trouble, Grace."

Grace looked at her sharply. "Compose yourself, Amy, because this is going to be a blow. And I don't want you to think I take any satisfaction in bringing you news like this. I wouldn't be here if I didn't feel it was my plain duty to tell you before you hear it from some busybody and maybe faint dead away on the street."

Amy's eyes grew round in anticipation, worry. "Lucian. He's been hurt in that devilish—— And not an hour ago——"

"It's not Lucian. I simply can't beat about the bush, Amy. It's not my way. Barnabas is keeping another woman."

The statement was so ridiculous that Amy giggled. "Barnabas! Why, Grace—that's impossible! He's never looked at another——"

"This is *not* idle gossip, Amy. You know I wouldn't demean myself to gossip. She's a young girl, very beautiful, they say. He's given her the old Olney farm and settled quite a lot of money on her, and she has a baby that was born last winter, and Bailey Philpott, who saw it with his own eyes, say's its the living image of Barnabas, and you know Bailey is absolutely reliable. He'd never say a thing like——"

Amy leaned against the bedpost. Her face looked suddenly yellow, sick, and quite old. "Not Barnabas. Bailey's made a mistake. Barnabas couldn't—— Bailey's just mistaken, Grace."

"I wish I could believe he was. But he's had to go to see this woman several times. Lucian's buying land from her for the new mill, and Bailey's been negotiating. Last spring he saw Barnabas leave the house. And just last week he saw Barnabas there again. And he found out through the bank that Barnabas set up a trust or something for her, and she didn't pay a cent for the farm, it was an outright, bald-faced gift, so naturally——"

Amy whimpered, "Grace, I think I'm going to be sick."

Grace snatched the smelling salts from the dresser and lunged at Amy with them. "Lie down, dear. I'll loosen your corset. You'll have to be brave, Amy. It would be absolutely fatal to give in to this. The only sure rule in handling men is never to give in to them. Here now, let me help you."

Her corset loosened, Amy sank back on the bed, and Grace waved the smelling salts under her nose. Amy's grief was not majestic: she crumpled under it like a woebegone, sniffling child. In other people's crises she bustled; in her own, her immaturity betrayed her. She groped, whimpering, toward the core of this terrible catastrophe. She no longer had what every other woman had, a faithful husband. She'd always be different, scorned, laughed at, talked about, pitied. And for all this, the mournful future, she cried. "Why did you tell me, Grace? Oh—why did you have to *tell* me?"

Grace dabbed cologne on a handkerchief and swabbed Amy's forehead. "Now, dear, you don't mean that. You wouldn't want to find out from some horrible common person who wouldn't understand. Why, Amy, you know I only did it to be kind. Now I'm going to pull down the blinds, and you just have a good cry. I'll run downstairs and have Mrs. O'Hearn make you a nice hot cup of tea."

While Grace was gone, Amy wept. Then, over the tea, they made plans, finally settling on one which involved only the white lie of saying that Amy had a bad headache which would keep her in her room till she felt able to cope with Barnabas. "It'll give you time to get used to it," said Grace. "Then when you feel up to it, you can have it out with him and simply demand that he give her up."

"What if he won't?"

"Oh, there's no question of that! Just give him a plain ultimatum. Either she goes, or you do. He'll see the light fast enough. They always do."

They chatted on, laying their plans almost happily. True, it was a terrible thing, really tragic. But when Barnabas had repented, and Amy had nobly forgiven him, she'd see it had happened for the best. They'd probably go to Europe on a second honeymoon.

Amy followed the plan scrupulously. She had supper on a tray in her room, and she cried a little, embroidered a little, manicured her nails, and fell asleep early, first making sure her door was locked against Barnabas. The next morning she breakfasted in bed, dressed herself in a new grey silk, and had Patrick O'Hearn drive her to church. When she returned she felt able to cope with Barnabas, who was sitting on the veranda reading the paper.

She sat down stiffly on a bamboo chair that creaked with her weight. "Barnabas, I want to speak with you."

He smiled at her. "I'm glad to see you're better, my dear."

"Appearances may be deceptive." She stared at him with a glance she imagined to be laden with deep meaning.

Barnabas waited for her to continue, and when she did not, he resumed reading the paper.

She found this unbearable. "Barnabas! I know."

He said absently, "That's fine, my dear. I'm glad to hear it."

"Barnabas! Put down that paper and listen to me!"

When he did so, and his gentle eyes rested on her face, she found it difficult to go on. In a wavering voice she repeated, "I know. You must choose between us, Barnabas. In a matter like this, no decent woman can compromise."

"Amy, what are you talking about?"

She had resolved not to cry on this occasion, but to treat Barnabas like an erring child. She blinked to keep back the tears. "To pretend you're innocent only makes it worse. It's depraved, that's what it is. You know very well what I mean."

"I do not."

"I will not condescend to quarrel, Barnabas. And I certainly don't want to smirch my tongue with saying this, but if I must, I must. I know you're keeping some woman, and you've given her the Olney farm, and you've settled money on her, and she's had a baby."

He looked at her candidly, but with no show of excitement. "You have been misinformed, Amy. It's true I have given a certain woman the use of the farm, and a little money. This much I did from a painful duty. In the sense you mean, I'm not keeping her, and her child is not mine."

"Why should you give her all that if you're not keeping her? What

else does keeping mean? I'm not two years old, Barnabas, and you can't expect me to believe any such ridiculous story."

"But I do expect it, Amy. I've never lied to you, nor, I believe, to anyone."

She dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief, but she was crying more because the plans were going wrong, because Barnabas was not behaving properly, than because his denial increased her unhappiness. The worst had happened, and she believed the worst. Nothing he said could therefore increase what she was always afterwards to call "her grief". "You're a wolf in sheep's clothing. I know that now. I've given you the best years of my life, and now, when you show your true colours, I'm willing to forgive the humiliation and forget, if you'll only confess and give the woman up."

"I can't give up what isn't mine, my dear."

She was losing her temper. She stood up and stamped her foot, and her plump face, the eyes puffy now from crying, quivered in anger. "If the child's not yours, whose is it?"

He looked at her, and if she had then been willing to notice she might have seen that in the bright summer sunshine, Barnabas looked old, tired. There were new wrinkles about his eyes, and his mouth looked patient, a little sad. "I'd give a good deal not to have to tell you this, Amy. The baby is Lucian's."

"Lucian's!" she gasped. The shock was so great, so unexpected that even her tears stopped flowing. For a moment she was utterly still, staring at him, as the realization of Barnabas's meaning sank into her childlike senses. Lucian! Darling, darling Lucian—her baby, her *son*, the great adoration of her life, the person she loved more than any other in the world, more even than Barnabas—yes, much more than Barnabas. Slowly she collected herself and assembled the only defence she ever had against unpleasant truth: denial. "It's not true!" she screamed hysterically. "It's not! It's not!"

He went to her to try to comfort her. He intended to take her in his arms and let her cry out all the grief, but when he touched her shoulder she reached out in fury and slapped him. "Don't you ever come near me, you—you viper! Don't you dare to touch me, ever again!"

"But, Amy, be reasonable! Since Lucian did this thing, we must face it, and it will be easier if we face it together. I'm sorry I couldn't spare you, but——"

"You could spare me by not lying, Barnabas! Oh, how can you sink so low as to slander your own son!"



"Amy! Do you think it's been easy for me to know that my son is wicked and irresponsible? That he seduced a little mill girl and then——"

She put her hands over her ears. "I won't listen! I won't! How can you say such things about Lucian? And they can't be true. You must have gone crazy to suggest such a thing, when all the time he was in Europe with Adelaide. He couldn't have done it—he *couldn't*!"

"It happened before he went to Europe."

"When he was in the very *act* of marrying Adelaide, and everybody knows he simply adores the ground she walks on!"

"Does he?" said Barnabas drily.

"Of *course* he does! Barnabas, I'll give you one more chance. If you don't tell me the truth now, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live."

"I have told you the truth, Amy."

She turned and ran into the house at a birdlike trot, her little feet tapping on the bare porch in a jerky staccato. He heard her run up the stairs. For some time he sat where he was, his paper forgotten, staring over the sun-baked grass and the bright round beds of annuals, thinking irrelevantly that the zinnias needed weeding. He watched some robins on the lawn, and he watched a pony-cart go down the street, carrying two little girls dressed in Sunday white and ribbons. Then the maid came to tell him dinner was ready, and she informed him that Mrs. Olney would not be down because her headache had returned.

He swallowed food, not tasting what he ate. It was not so much Amy's tantrum that bothered him, for he did not believe that she would never speak to him again. What bothered him was a slowly growing oppression, a sense of dense frustration. He had become not his brother's keeper, but his son's. By accepting Lucian's responsibility for Kitty, he had saddled himself with a young man of the sea, and he had no illusion that Lucian would ever climb off his back and walk. Unless Lucian himself spoke out, Amy would never be convinced. And, because all Barnabas's arrangements for Kitty had been made while Lucian was on his honeymoon, no one else would ever be convinced either.

Even so, he thought, they were all too ready to believe the worst of him, of Barnabas. Why? Did they really dislike him so much? For what cause? What had he ever done to—well, he had dissented from them, for one thing. Born in their midst, one of the elect, he yet doubted their faith. He had never said so aloud, but certainly the

Brahmins had ways of smelling out the one among them who denied Brahma. He did not worship his mills, nor theirs. He did not believe this blue-serge, managerial life was the only way of life possible to man. He did not trust the godliness of gold. And so they hated him, as the faithful must always hate the heretic. Perhaps for years they had been waiting for just this chance—or any chance—to spit him out. Perhaps long ago they would have broken him as they'd broken old Salvation Bess, had they been able to. But they couldn't use that means: he was too good a businessman. They could only try to break his spirit, or his heart.

Yet why Amy should act with them—— Well, was she not their daughter, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, faith of their faith? Or perhaps it was merely that a woman will believe almost any evil of her husband, and none of her son.

He returned to Fall River that night without seeing Amy again. At the end of the week he called her as usual to ask if there was anything she wanted from town. The maid told him that Mrs. Olney was not at home. He did not heed the warning and went to Westport Harbor as usual. He saw little of his wife, who pointedly managed not to speak to him whether they were alone or with other people. He thought, returning to Fall River again, that she would get over it. Amy had never been the sort to hold a grudge for long, and she loved to chatter. But by the following week-end she had not got over it.

He concluded, perhaps foolishly, that since his presence in the country disturbed her, he would stay in town. And, because the week-ends were long and lonely, he went to Quaker Meeting every Sunday, although it was plain that he was not welcome. Perhaps he was growing hypersensitive, but it seemed to him that during the silent meetings an undercurrent of restraint disturbed the gathering, stalking that silence which should have been a communion of souls. When the meeting was not silent, it was all too often the more inflexible and ancient of the Friends whom the spirit moved to speech: the loquacious bores like old Josiah Shelton and old Tabitha Wilkes. Being past the age of both sin and revelation, these two usually dwelt upon the past, demanding that the righteous return to the ways of their grandfathers, the golden, perfect ways. Now, however, they were alarmed by a hedonist in their midst, one who covered his sin with hypocrisy, sheltering himself behind a living lie. Barnabas could hardly doubt that he was the devil of whom they spoke.

Finally the situation became so embarrassing, both for himself and

for the Friends, that he stayed away, thus sparing them the painful necessity of reading him out of Meeting.

After that he formed the habit of taking long walks on Sundays if the weather permitted; and if it did not, he would search out old books in his library and read them—Emerson, Thoreau, Montaigne, Erasmus. He'd always been addicted to reading, when he had the time, but now he read with real attention, finding much solace in it. If Barnabas was leading one of the lives of quiet desperation (and he had no reason to doubt that he was), it had become suddenly, extraordinarily, peaceful.

As for Lucian, chugging about town in his Stanley Steamer and missing none of the gossip, he thought the whole thing a wonderful, tantalizing, exhilarating joke. And whenever he got the chance he inconspicuously helped the gossip along.

## PART FOUR

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### The Long Strike

The new mill building was long, narrow, four stories high. Its red brick walls and its tall smokestack glared upon a landscape which, until its coming, had been modest and peaceful. The rows of blank windows stared vacantly over the roofs of the neat old cottages, the shabby barns, the gnarled orchards, and the rocky, barren land. The people who lived within sight of the thing would look up now and then from their tasks: chopping wood, carrying grain to the hens, turning the lean horse out to pasture, milking the scrawny cow, replacing the fallen stones in the orchard wall. And they'd say, well now, maybe it was a good thing—time the city moved out to them. It'd make land values go up, give the young ones a chance to earn a little cash in their spare time, and come to think of it, a man might do a turn there himself in the off seasons. The telephone would be a sure thing now, plenty of people had heard on good authority they were going to start setting the poles any day. And the electric light—wouldn't be long before they had that, too. It was wonderful the way things looked up when a mill came into the neighbourhood.

Mr. Silas Honeyman, who owned the general store at the intersection, was the first to capitalize upon the new prosperity. He sold a tract of land on the highway to Mr. Philpott, and people said he got a good price for it, five times what it was worth; because if there was one man around shrewder at a bargain than Mr. Philpott, it was Mr. Honeyman. The ink was hardly dry on the deed before the construction crews came and started to raise block after block of wooden tenements, each like all the others, bare wooden walls, two windows in the front, two in the back, four plain square rooms inside. Mr. Honeyman watched with satisfaction, and without delay he got himself a liquor licence and started building a saloon. With the money left over, he might put up a few tenements himself. Others, seeing his prosperity, decided they would do likewise. Sell half the land, build tenements on the rest—why, you couldn't lose. But there was no rush to Mr.

Philpott or Mr. Lucian Olney with offers to sell. No. Let the buyer seek the seller while the prices rose. In a situation like this the land didn't spoil from a few weeks of waiting; and only a fool went around advertising, making himself vulnerable, proclaiming his need.

While they waited for the buyers, Mr. Honeyman and some of his cronies speculated about Miss McCarran, wondering if she'd try to open a fancy house now that there was a chance of trade. Many thought she would. They'd have to put a stop to it. Saloons, tenements, mills—those were all right, good legitimate business. But fancy houses—no.

"Can't put a stop to it till she starts it," said Mr. Honeyman drily, thinking that perhaps if she didn't start one, he should. Mint of money in 'em—or so he'd always heard.

The unwonted activity, the happy clatter of hammers and wagon wheels, the stacks of new lumber everywhere, all the strange competent workmen, the beautiful, money-making machinery moving into the mill, trees coming down, buildings going up, brooks being dammed to make pools—with all this going on, even the most conservative found his dreams turning on thoughts of gold. The whole look and feeling of the countryside was changing overnight. Things the oldest man remembered as landmarks of his childhood—things that were as much a part of life and home as the smell of autumn air, the green of spring, September fog—disappeared, traceless. Memories became unbelievable as the blocks of tenements swallowed now an orchard, now the hill where the bayberries had grown, now the old stone barn on the Lightfellow place, now the swamp where the lady-slippers grew and the whippoorwill made his nest each spring. A few old ones didn't like it, and they said so. They were discounted as mere complainers, for the old never liked change. Why should they, with no change ahead of them but death?

It's different with us, who have our children to think of and our own way to make. The old had their chance, and precious little had ever come of it. Let them get out of our way now: this is our show. There'll be no more grubbing in the worthless earth, no more making do with worn-out coats, houses falling down with age, and dowdy, home-make junk. "My grandfather talked like his best friend had died when they cut down the old chestnut tree on the corner. And I said to him, 'A decent suit of clothes on your back is worth more than an old chestnut any day'. And he said to me, 'New today, rags tomorrow—if God is good they'll last till my funeral'. And what I say is, talk like that isn't healthy. Glooming over the stump of an old tree. Down-right

morbid. But then, he's old. And I said to him, 'Gramp, this is progress'. He doesn't know the meaning of the word though, living in the past like he does, and he looked at me like I was crazy, and you know what he said? He said, 'Progress, eh? Well now, you sure know which end of the circle you got hold of?' "

Thus they dreamed, each manipulating his assets with all the shrewdness he could muster, while they waited to get rich. All, that is, except Silence Bess, who flatly refused to sell any of her land, to rent any of it, or to construct any tenements on it herself. If one wanted to see how the country had been before the boom struck it, one had only to look at Miss Bess's thirty fallow acres, with their low stone walls, their ancient apple and pear trees, gnarly and grey, the shallow brook singing in its rocky bed with the willows bending over it and the cowslips and royal ferns along its banks, and the windswept fields where nothing grew any more but tough, wild grasses and weeds like vetch, daisies, buttercups, milkweed, goldenrod, and asters. The old Olney farm adjoining it was much the same except for the small acreage at the far side taken up by the new mill. The two places together made a wild island, a barricade against progress. When spring came the fallow acres put forth a haze of wistful green, defying the raw new tenements around them. The brook swelled proudly with every rain, and the old orchard blossomed in clouds of glory. Little Rafe McCarran crawled and tottered around the backyard, trying to catch the baby chicks in his hands, laughing at the worried hens who foiled him. A sentimental young carpenter stole into the orchard at dusk and secretly picked violets for his sweetheart.

To Mr. Bailey Philpott, to Silas Honeyman, and to most of the others who had given up these things, so much vacant land was an eyesore. Mr. Philpott said sourly that the least that stubborn woman (he meant Miss Bess) could do in the interest of the community was to let them put a couple of roads through, save the drays miles if you added it up, year in year out. Mr. Honeyman said all that land going to waste gave him the creeps. Mr. Lightfellow, who had a religious bent, said Silence was defying God to stand in the way of progress; and Mr. Shem Revere said they ought to call a town meeting to thrash it out and compel the woman to do the right thing. Then one of the old conservatives said things had come to a pretty pass when a woman couldn't do as she pleased with her own property, and they had to let the matter drop for the time being.

Curiously, it was Silence Bess on whom they vented their anger. Kitty McCarran also kept twenty or more idle acres, but they had little

to say about that. She was Barnabas Olney's kept woman, as everyone knew by now, and they had a pretty good idea it wasn't Lucian, but Barnabas, who was really behind the mill. She'd probably talked him into building there, and she was probably only biding her time till values went skyhigh before she built her place up solid. If you put two and two together right, it looked like she was a mighty smart woman, even if she was just an Irish mick. They owed the mill to her anyhow. "Of course, I wouldn't let my wife get friendly with her, and I won't let my children play with that kid of hers. But it doesn't do a bit of harm to give her a good-morning when you see her, does it?"

Had Kitty realized that they accorded her even this much grudging respect, she would have been amazed. She was afraid of her neighbours. They were not really individuals to her, but, collectively, her mirror on the world. Although they were foreign to her in the same way that her house and its furniture were foreign, she expected them to behave toward her as Rosie had behaved, as she imagined all decent, right-thinking people would have to behave. Miss Bess was nice to her because Miss Bess was queer, and although decent, not right-thinking. Mr. Olney was good to her because he was afraid of what might happen to his whole family if she talked; but he had flatly refused to let her build tenements like everyone else. She'd been to see him twice about it, and he'd simply said he didn't want the land built up in slums.

She had argued, "But it's an injustice to Rafe, sir. It's going to be hard enough for him in this life without his suffering poverty on top of everything else."

"I do not believe he will suffer from poverty, Miss McCarran. I consented to your leasing the land for the mill only because Lucian wanted it, and the farm is really part of his patrimony. But on this other matter, no. You would find it too unpleasant to be surrounded by tenements."

"That I'll be anyhow, Mr. Olney. And the money—for Rafe. There are few enough ways I can look out for him. It seems a pity——"

"You are quite well off now, Miss McCarran. I imagine few of your neighbours have incomes of twenty-six hundred dollars a year. If you want to invest some of that in mill property, I have certainly no objection. But no tenements on the farm."

That sort of stubbornness was not really nice in Mr. Olney. But in other ways she had to admit he had been good to her, though for his own reasons, of course.

Also Father Manfred was kind to her, but only because it was his duty to save all the souls he could. He did not approve of her. And Mr. Honeyman was always courteous when she went into his general store, but only because she was a good customer. These four completed the total of those that Kitty, by stretching her imagination a little and making excuses, could call her friends. In truth she was unspeakably lonely. So lonely that at times she longed to be back in Andrew's crowded tenement, listening to Rosie whine and the baby cry. Sometimes she even longed for the mill: its heat and noise and violence, and she thought she'd rather be wearing her feet out on those cruel stairs than to be as she was now, rich and comfortable, perhaps, but all alone.

She had few resources. There was the housework, needlework, the chores around the farm—in addition to her horse, she now had a cow and some chickens—and there was Rafe to play with. Miss Bess tried to get her interested in large events, and Kitty tried to respond, but it was no use. She thought Suffrage worse than silly: it was almost wicked to try to set women up as the equals of men, with the vote and all. She made a mild effort to help Miss Bess in the cause of the unwed mothers, but they were a constant reminder of her own predicament, and sometimes, after a few hours with one of them, she would be so unhappy that she would scold Rafe for nothing at all, and he would start to cry, and everything got worse. And, as she said to Silence, "It isn't as if they had any use for me. They know all about me, Miss Bess, and it isn't in them to have any respect for their own kind. And what it seems to me is, it's just better to leave the whole matter to the nuns, that have God's permission to handle it. Instead of me going around poking my nose in where I'm not wanted and getting myself insulted."

"You're too sensitive, Kitty."

"Sensitive, is it? Well, maybe so, Miss Bess. But nobody likes to be insulted, especially by a lot of Portuguese riff-raff like those girls. You can say what you want about the Irish, and they certainly have their faults like everybody else, but they're a good big cut above the Portuguese, Miss Bess."

"Last come, worst served," said Silence cryptically. She could vividly remember that, when she was a girl, the Irish had been considered the lowest form of life. And now they were running Boston and New York and probably a good many other places. And their place on the social scale had been taken by Italians, Portuguese, and Russian Jews. "Well, you have to do something with yourself, Kitty."



You can't just sit here and rot. I wonder—perhaps you should go to school—learn the piano, or a foreign language.”

“At my age, Miss Bess? Are you serious?”

“Um—I suppose that isn't very practical. But you know, you could go away somewhere, start a new life——”

“I think not, Miss Bess. That Philpott man is so sharp he'd do me out of my land rent the second my back was turned. I've been thinking, though, watching all these buildings go up, that if I could get hold of a bit of property to take care of, it would give me an interest and something to do. And provide for Rafe's future. What do you think?”

“I think it's a wonderful idea. I'll get you some books and things about real estate and you can read up on it. The woods are full of crooks like Bailey Philpott. You'd have to go into it with your eyes open. The Yankees are a hard bunch when it comes to business, and I should know, if anyone does. Though perhaps strictly speaking you can't call Pugh a Yankee.”

Kitty's face lit up in a beautiful, wistful smile. “But I do think now, Miss Bess, that they respect people with property. And maybe they won't be quite so hard on me if——”

“You have a point there, Kitty. Possibly a rich man can't get into the Kingdom of Heaven, but what is Heaven beside New England?”

Silence brought books about property, taxes, and investments, and Kitty forced her way through them, but at that moment she did nothing more tangible to realize her plans. She was really afraid to take any daring step, such as investing money. And the time continued to hang heavy on her hands.

It was then that she began to make a vigorous effort to improve herself: to obliterate her brogue, to learn how to dress in keeping with her income, to cook new dishes, and to fix up her house. She bought women's magazines and studied the pictures of model rooms and pored over the fashion plates. Then she would go on long shopping tours looking for the things she'd seen in the pictures. She bought a set of Mission oak for the parlour, and one of bird's-eye maple for the bedroom. She found a sense of triumph in getting rid of all the old trash she hated. Oh, it was a wonderful feeling, truly wonderful, to be able to go into the stores and buy what you wanted and pay the full price for it, with a high head and no haggling!

Next she bought a Haviland china dinner service for twelve. It had gold borders and hand-painted pink roses. Then she had to buy a fumed oak dining-room set to go with the china. Silence was inevitably

drawn into the project, forced to admire everything as it arrived. Kitty said to her once, "I don't see how people like the Olneys could have such shabby things. Fit for nothing but firewood."

"You planning to use them for that?" asked Silence mildly.

"Um. I stacked the things from the parlour in the barn, and when everybody isn't so busy building tenements, I'll get a boy to chop them up. Miss Bess, shall I put the buffet over there, or between the windows?"

The buffet was built like an oversized coffin, exuding lugubrious complacency. "Put it between the windows. If you don't want the furniture, I'd like to have it. I'll give you a couple of loads of firewood for it. Save you the chopping."

"Take it and welcome, and don't even think of the wood, but what will you do with such junk?"

"I like it. And Barnabas may want some of it. Did he tell you you could destroy it?"

"I never asked him. He said to make myself comfortable, and since it's so worthless, why should he care?" She pulled a pewter porringer from a box where she's been dumping the old dishes. "Look at that, nothing but old pewter, and right in the dining-room like it was plate!"

Silence studied the craftsman's worn mark on the bottom. "Sure you don't want it? It was made by Paul Revere."

"Who was he?"

"Oh—a silversmith."

"And not much good, from the look of that. I wouldn't care if St. Anthony himself had made it, it's that ugly." She hummed happily as she put the new china in the new china cabinet. "It's a pity I didn't think about a rug before I got all this stuff in here. It needs something bright on the floor to lighten things up."

"A Sarouk, maybe," said Silence drily.

"What's that?"

"A kind of Oriental carpet."

"I'd rather get a real good Wilton," said Kitty.

Silence was rooting among the old Crown Derby dishes in the discard box. "I'll buy these from you, Kitty."

"Oh, no, you won't! You take 'em and welcome, though a lot of them don't even match. And, you know, there's a platter there just like one we had in Ireland, and I always hated it."

"I should think you'd like to keep something that reminded you of Ireland."

"And go half out of my mind like my Aunt Bridie, drooling over an

old Beleck cream pitcher, cracked at that? No, Ireland's very backward, and we never had anything fashionable and nice there. The truth is, Miss Bess, if you're not rich in Ireland life is a very hard thing, and the chances are you don't even get enough to eat."

"Well, that's pretty true here, too, isn't it?"

Kitty brushed excelsior from the new plates, laughing. "Ah, but here you've a chance to make the money, Miss Bess."

"Kitty, let's walk over to the mill before the men quit. Perhaps we can talk them into hauling this stuff to my place in one of their drays."

Kitty pulled off her apron and brushed the excelsior from her dress. "That's a grand idea. Because how I'll get the place cleaned properly till the old stuff's out, I do not know." She lifted Rafe from the cradle where he'd been lying with his eyes wide open staring at the ceiling. "He's getting that heavy!"

"We'll take turns carrying him." They started off across the fields spring-clad in new green, spongy underfoot. "Kitty, you've changed a lot since I've known you. You're making yourself over into an American at a great rate."

"Well, I wouldn't want Rafe to be ashamed of me when he grows up, Miss Bess. And besides, life's hard enough without a person going around being deliberately different from everybody else."

"But most of the Irish are always saying everything here is wrong, everything back there is right. They're always singing Irish songs and eating soda bread and clinging to their old customs as if just to be Irish was all that mattered."

Kitty laughed. With the soft spring sunlight glinting on her black hair and her cheeks flushed from walking, she was beautiful, full of singing vitality. "Oh, they're no good, the lot of them. They come here because they failed there, and they've nothing in their heads but silly notions about the streets paved with gold, and thinking all they have to do is scoop it up. And the minute they step off the boat they find they're nothing but dirt, and lucky if they can get a job for a dollar a day, killing themselves with such work as they never saw the like of at home. And nobody else 'll have anything to do with them. That's one thing an Irishman can't stand, Miss Bess—being lonesome with nobody to tell his tall tales to. So they have to get together over the whisky and tell 'em to each other, though for sure they've all heard 'em before. And along with it goes telling each other how grand they are because they're Irish. That's something nobody can take away from them, sure."

"Kitty, that's a very penetrating observation."

"Well now, wouldn't I be a plain fool not to know my own people, born and raised with 'em like I was?"

"I don't feel that I know my own people any too well."

"Oh, there's more variety among the Americans. Then, too, when you're rich you have more room to be yourself. Besides, they never kicked you out, so you never had a chance to be alone from them and think about them from a distance. Not that they do wrong to shun me. When a girl gets herself in trouble, she can't expect anything else. But if you'll notice, Miss Bess, it's the Americans like yourself and Mr. Olney that speak to me, not the Irish. But of course the Americans are heretics, so I suppose it doesn't matter what they do. Does it?"

Silence laughed in delight over this moral pronouncement. "Well, there are two sides to it in your case. If you hadn't got into trouble, you'd probably still be working in the mill. Perhaps you're the one Irishwoman in several million who really did step off the boat on to streets of gold." She added a word of cautious propaganda. "And that gives you a chance really to make something of yourself, if you put your mind to it."

A sullen frown clouded Kitty's face. "I'm putting my mind to it, and don't think I'm not." She looked up at the bleak oblong of Lucian's mill, hating it because it was his: no thanks to him that she had a cent. "That's one thing about America—they'll all speak up to you fast enough if you're rich. I don't mean just pokey rich like me, but really rich, like Mr. Olney."

Silence did not tell her that very few people were now speaking to Barnabas. She studied the men who were unloading machinery from the drays and moving it into the building. "There's one who looks decent. Let's ask him."

He seemed to be in charge of the work crew, and even though his back was toward them, Kitty knew she had seen him before. She groped for his name, a sense of panic rising in her, as Silence, still carrying Rafe, walked toward him with her customary air of bustling assurance. "Excuse me, my good man. I wonder if you could be so kind as to——"

He turned. It was Philip Hawkes.

That evening Philip knocked on Kitty's door. Her heart pounded unreasonably when she let him in. There was a strange, acute shame

in facing him, a painful refinement of the shame she felt when she approached strangers. For Philip was the lost opportunity: everything would have been different if she'd married Philip. And Philip had already gone to Lowell before she had made this mess of her life. He had not been around to see the gradual development of her disaster and get used to it, as perhaps the others had done in some measure. All he knew, then, would be the spiteful things Rosie and the others had told him; and that could only mean he'd have no use now for Kitty McCarran.

He sat down before the kitchen fireplace, showing no restraint. "I could use a cup of tea, Kitty." He took a pipe from his pocket, filled it, not looking at her as he talked. "I've been here a week, and I should have come sooner, but I was afraid to. I kept going over it in my mind, and I couldn't think of anything to say to you."

As she looked at his familiar craggy face, a face from home, a pang of deep regret stabbed through her. Why couldn't she have loved Philip? Oh, *why*? "Have you had your supper?"

"I had a sandwich at Honeyman's. You look well, Kitty. Prosperity agrees with you."

"Who told you I was prosperous?" she asked sharply, bustling about the stove fixing him something to eat. "Because they have no call to talk about my business, whoever it was."

"Oh, come off it. How can you expect *not* to be talked about? Funny thing, everybody says you're bad, except Andrew—he never says anyone is bad. And they all envy you because you got away with it—came out of it rich. They don't say it in so many words, but—Rosie's especially sore. I suppose it is galling to have it dinned into you all your life that the primrose path is full of thorns, and then to find out——"

"Stop talking like that, Philip! Are you going to work here at the new mill?"

"No. They rented machinery from my company, and I came down from Lowell to instal it. When the job's done, I go back. I'm going to school up there at night. Learning engineering."

"That's nice. It looked like you'd worked yourself up, bossing all those men. Your Aunt Minerva must be proud of you."

"She's not doing badly herself. She married Mr. Rubashevski, you know."

"Did she? And him so queer. What do you suppose possessed her?" Kitty suddenly laughed. "I liked her—she was good to me. But it's the truth she's no beauty, and not so young either to be getting married."

"I wasn't here when it happened. Whoa, Kitty! Quit piling stuff on that plate. I can't eat all that."

"Sure you can. Pull up that table, then you can eat by the fire. Well, go on. Tell me about Aunt Minerva."

"She just up and married him, and first thing Andrew and Rosie knew, she was moving out. Rosie took it as an insult. She's pretty touchy—doesn't feel well, I suppose. And then of course she never got over the baby dying."

"Oh, that's a pity, Philip. It was always puny, but——"

"Not that baby. It was the second one that died, a few weeks after it was born. Now they're going to have another in a couple of months. And Rosie isn't strong enough to—well, it's not my business, I suppose."

"And how's my Aunt Bridie?"

"Just the same. Sweet and vague. Still packing dinners and carrying them to the mill. I don't know what she'll do when they move out here. They haven't told her yet, but——"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! You mean Andrew's coming to work for Lucian?" The name slipped out thus, informally.

Philip shot a sharp glance at her, but she was stirring sugar into her tea and did not notice it. "Yes. He's to have charge of one of the weaverrooms. Andrew's not too happy about it—thinks he's being disloyal to Mr. Barnabas, but he went and talked it over with him and Mr. Barnabas said he should take the job. He never fires anybody, so he can't make Andrew a foreman until one of them dies on his feet. It's five dollars more a week, and with Rosie having a baby every year he can't afford to turn it down."

The news caused conflicting emotions in Kitty. It might be hard, having them living close by and never speaking to her, and Rosie spreading lies about her. On the other hand, they'd see how she'd come up in the world, and that was some satisfaction. "They must have trouble getting along with Miss Hawkes gone. Because it's the truth, Philip, she made more money than anyone else in that house."

"She still manages to help more than they'll admit. They won't take money from her, but she and Mr. Rubashevski have a little store on South Main Street, and Aunt Minerva's always bringing clothes around, saying they're shopworn. She'd do more if they'd let her. Why don't you go to see her, Kitty? She always liked you, and she still does. It hurt her when you left and never tried to get in touch with her again."

"No, thank you, Philip. I'm not going around forcing myself on people just to be insulted."

"She won't come here for fear you'll think she's prying. You won't go to her for fear of being insulted. It's a lot of damned nonsense to break a friendship over. I'm not one to go around praising the Lord or blaming the devil, but whichever of 'em invented pride certainly did a nasty piece of work."

"You're just as blasphemous as ever."

"Oh well—somebody has to squawk about the big moguls."

A silence fell between them, constrained because although it seemed that they had said all they had to say to each other, they knew this was not so. Philip stared at the fire, Kitty down at her hands. Then suddenly Philip said, "I wonder what——" And at the same instant Kitty said, "Philip, I wonder if——" They both stopped, looking at each other. Their glances locked. A slow flush spread over Kitty's face.

Philip leaned forward and knocked the ashes from his pipe. "I don't imagine," he said, "that it would have worked out."

Kitty's painful blush deepened. She said honestly, "For me, it would have been better than this."

"Only from a conventional point of view. And what does that amount to? If you could see Rosie—I don't think anything—not anything on earth—could be worse than the sort of life Rosie leads. And what's it done to her."

"At least decent people speak to her."

"Decent people! Who are they? The ones who haven't been found out yet? Now that Rosie can't work, and you and I and Aunt Minerva have all gone, there's only Andrew's pay. And Gramma to take care of. Kitty, Rosie and her babies don't get enough to eat!"

"It wouldn't have been like that with us! You got a good job in Lowell right away."

"But you see, I wouldn't have gone to Lowell. I wouldn't have dared. We'd have gone on living in that tenement, falling out of bed every morning to stagger over to the mill, falling into bed every night bone tired. We'd have a little more than Rosie and Andrew have, because there'd be more of us to work. Until you had to stop, like Rosie, to have a baby every year. And you and she'd be quarrelling all the time, cooped up there together. God Himself couldn't get along with Rosie in the condition she's in now."

Kitty began to cry. Against her will the tears came, crumpling dignity, in spite of pride. There was comfort of a kind in being with

Philip, one who knew everything and who yet did not reproach her. And perhaps he still loved her. Real love did not die so quickly, she thought, not in a year or two. "But I wouldn't be alone, Philip! That's the awful thing. Sometimes whole days go by and nobody says a word to me. Nobody cares if I'm alive or dead, Philip. And when I think I'll go crazy from the stillness and I go out to the stores, the people look at me, even the strangers, and I see in their eyes what they're thinking, now, that I'm like a worm crawled out of their filthy sewers. And God forgive me, Philip, I'd like to reach out my two hands and choke them till they were dead, and screaming in the dying!"

He did not move to comfort her. He only bent forward closer to the fire, and his shoulders hunched over a little as he stared into it. "You're imagining it, Kitty. You're building it up in your mind from your own guilt. Most of the people in this town never heard of you. They look at you because you're beautiful. Perhaps the women feel a little envy. Most of the men, I believe, must feel desire. But I'm sure very few of them know who you are."

She caught her breath, a half-strangled sob. "No! You're talking only to be kind, Philip. They know—every dreary mother's son of 'em. I wake up in the dark of nights sometimes, and I hear the stillness pushing down all through the house, and even out into the fields. And then I feel their eyes coming at me through the dark. Thousands and thousands of hard little eyes boring holes in the night to find me. And I have to pull the blanket over my head and lie there shivering, because any minute they'll start screaming things."

"What things?"

"Words. Names. Bad names. Low, bad words."

"Oh, God," he said. "You're all mixed up."

She did not answer. She sat still, her hands in her lap, silently crying. He stayed where he was, bent over, looking into the fire. The stillness grew heavy, until finally a log fell, breaking it with a small crash, and the flames licked up around the miniature red chaos. He said, "Kitty, you've got to stop it. You're making a little private hell for yourself. People just don't care that much. And even if they do—what they think about you isn't real—you can't run your life by it. They're busy living their own lives, and you have to start living yours—cut out this brooding and do something."

"What?"

"Anything. Start a chicken farm. Go in for charity——"

"The charity people are the worst of the lot. The way they look at



me—oh, they'll take my money fast enough, but as for saying a decent word to me, that they won't."

"All right, go in for this suffragette business with Miss Bess."

"Oh, Philip, that's so unrefined! Going to jail, and throwing stones through windows. It's—— And like Father Manfred says, it's wrong-headed for women to be seeking the vote, and all they'd be doing is spoiling their innocence and sweetness to mix in with politics. But there is a thing, though. Property. Like these new tenements around. Wouldn't it be good if I bought a bit of property?"

"Be all right, I guess. But it hasn't much to do with people, has it?" He laughed in that disbelieving way he had, which she did not like. "You can't exactly make friends with a piece of property."

"But there'd be tenants and all."

"Um. But the relationship between tenants and landlords is not usually bursting with brotherly love, Kitty. Not around here, at least."

"But they'd have to look up to me, Philip. They couldn't insult me to my face if I owned the place."

"I know. That's not good enough, though. Just the absence of insult isn't much to live for." He stood up. "Where'd I leave my cap?"

"Oh, you're not going, Philip! Please, it's early yet——"

"And tomorrow's another hard day."

She clutched his arm. "Why did you come, Philip? Why?"

He stood looking down at her dark, silky hair. From the place on his arm where her hand rested, small licking flames seemed to run out, coursing through his body. He tried to breathe softly. "Because I wanted to."

"Philip, I made a terrible mistake. I—do you still—love me, Philip?"

He pitied her. And for a moment the pity cooled those little licking flames of desire. Didn't she know no woman should ever ask that question? Yes, of course she knew. The thing was, she could not help asking it. She was the sort of woman who could never help asking it. The woman who has a vested interest in possession, in love as possession. A sudden hot wave of hatred swept through him, so intense that it was almost like desire. Hatred for that sort of woman, and then, quickly, a sweet relief because he had escaped her ravenous possession. Escaped her hungriness. Escaped being eaten. He answered carefully, "I don't know, Kitty. I've tried hard to stop it, and I thought I had. But—tell me, do you still love him?"

"No! I hate him! I hate every rotten bone of him!"

"But with his mill here in your backyard—won't you be seeing a lot of him?"

"If I do, 'twill only be to curse each sight, and to curse my own eyes for looking!"

He tried to move her hand from his sleeve. Her fingers clutched frantically at his arm like hungry claws. "Kitty, it's better that I go. I don't want to make things worse for you."

"Just a little longer, Philip, so I won't be all alone. Look, I'll make some more tea, and we can talk, and—about your inventions, Philip. We'll talk about your inventions."

The little licking flames came back, wild, stinging through his veins. "If I stay, Kitty, it won't be to talk about inventions."

"Only," she whispered, "we mustn't wake the baby."

"No. But there's one thing you must understand, Kitty. I will not marry you. No matter what happens, I will not."

"Ah, no decent man could marry the likes of me, Philip." Yet she had the thought that he might not really mean it—after all, he was a Protestant, almost an atheist. It couldn't mean so much to him. And he must still love her, so wild he'd been for her—it seemed like only yesterday—

"I hate that crawling humble talk," he said. "It sets my teeth on edge."

"Shall I make the tea now, Philip?"

He laughed. "I told you. I don't want tea." He put his hand in her hair and twisted it roughly, making the pins fall, tearing the net. The black silky tendrils curled around his fingers. "Where's your bedroom?"

"Aren't you going to kiss me, Philip?"

"Sure," he muttered. "Sure. Anything you want, Kitty. Anything at all. In this line of work, I mean." And he laughed again, which she did not like. People should not laugh when—

He kissed her like a savage. Wild kisses, all desire. Her heart pounded, and a voice inside her cried out, "Lucian! Lucian!" Cried so loudly, and with such longing, that she thought in fright he must have heard it. But he had not, for his hand reached toward her bodice and tore it open, roughly. "I asked you," he said almost coldly, "where's your bedroom?"

He found this rude assuagement of his old desire poignant and sweet. It fulfilled him savagely, like a vengeance. Later, as he lay still beside her, he felt her hand against his bare flank, timidly seeking his hand,

perhaps for comfort. And so he took her hand and held it gently. Then he pitied her. He lay a long while in the dark, trying to love her. But he could not.

3

The mill began production in the autumn of 1903 with the manufacture of print cloth, the basic textile of the cotton industry. This was a coarse, rather narrow cloth which in the unfinished state might sell for as high as four cents a yard in good times, and in bad years might drop to less than a cent. It was a product with a peculiarly sensitive market, which suffered periodically from glut. In the old days, when New England had produced all the print cloth in the country, the solution for a glutted market was simple: the mills closed down until the market once more grew hungry. Famine followed surplus, and surplus famine, with the regularity of a law of nature; but the periods of famine were usually brief because the country was growing at an unprecedented rate, its population fed by the unending stream of immigrants. The raw frontiers cried for goods. As the railroads stretched their steel farther across the plains, the deserts, and the mountains, the scream for goods grew strident: a man could sell anything, however worthless.

In this industrial heaven following the Civil War, Ezra Pugh had grown rich, blandly accepting the rain of gold as if he himself had generated the blessed clouds from which it fell. He bought cotton high and sold it low. He issued stock without collateral, split the shares, consolidated them, and split them again as casually as if he dealt a hand of poker. He used furnaces that wasted coal, antiquated machinery that wasted man hours, mill designs so inefficient they wasted heat, light, power, and human energy. Still he made money. Still his stock paid dividends, judged by the recipients to be poor at ten per cent, passable at fifteen per cent, and bearable at twenty-five per cent. This Midas touch which could do no wrong mystically endowed the hands of Ezra Pugh and all other New England cloth fabricators. He called it know-how, and by virtue of it he became an oracle for all men on all subjects.

It was this know-how which Lucian Olney, to the mill born, had naturally inherited, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. With five thousand dollars of Adelaide Pugh Olney's money he had engraved some pretty shares of stock, paid a year's rent on land and water, and bought a few odds and ends for which the sellers demanded cash. For

everything else he paid in shares, and he sold enough extra ones to buy cotton and coal and meet his first payroll. If this was not know-how, what was? No dream, but the most tangible reality had raised an oblong building of solid brick and stocked it with the sturdiest non-automatic looms that money (shares) could buy and the old-design combers that caused cotton fever in the workers. He bought thousands of sucking shuttles before he discovered that even so conservative a manager as Pugh no longer used them. Right here, with the first suggestion of a touchy problem to solve, Lucian showed his acumen: he'd use the shuttles and say nothing about it. He was aware that the sucking shuttle spread tuberculosis among the workers, but that was hardly important. The healthy worker was probably undesirable, speaking from a purely philosophical point of view.

Thus Lucian, born in the golden days between the Civil War and the onrush of the twentieth century, blithely watched something—the walls of brick, the floors of oak, the shiny, throbbing machinery—grow from nothing: if you wanted to call the vivid engravings with which he sprinkled the town nothing. He, born of the managerial class and inheriting its know-how, had taken his rightful place in the rightful way, with no effort. The prince came into his heritage.

He expected his share of bad times, for naturally he considered himself a realist. But it wasn't as if one had to worry about real competition. The Association decided everything so that no one was hurt: they fixed the wages, the prices, the sort of contracts one could safely sign. They decreed when to step up production and when to curtail it. Lucian didn't have a thing to worry about.

What he overlooked was the growth of a different Association in the South, a vicious, price-cutting Association. When he shipped his first load of cloth to New York, Southern mills were underselling him by half a cent a yard. He didn't care, for they didn't have enough spindles to supply the market. Three months later Southern mills undersold him by three quarters of a cent, but his factor moved his cloth, though slowly. Six months later Southern mills undersold him by a cent and a half, and not a factor in New York would touch his print cloth.

He took a flyer in cotton to make up his losses.

The Association cut wages for weavers from nineteen and eight-tenths cents a sixty-yard piece to seventeen and a third cents. Since all other wages were based on weavers' wages, these also went down proportionately. The workers grumbled, but they took the cut. Lucian

was momentarily spared the necessity of passing a dividend, which was always hard on the prestige of a new mill.

Times did not improve, however.

The Association's next step was to force each weaver to operate more looms. Lucian, acting as his own superintendent, called his weaverroom foremen into his office to break the news. "You see, men," he said, in imitation of his father's candour, "it's impossible to ask the hands to take another cut, but if we don't get costs down, we'll have to close. Not just this mill, but all the mills in town. You know what that means. You people will have to do your bit by taking on more looms, say two more to a man. A twenty per cent layoff is not pleasant, I realize. But it's only temporary. Times are bound to pick up. And the hands we keep on will at least be able to make both ends meet—might even come out ahead with two extra looms per man."

The foremen looked at each other, then down at the carpet. Nobody said anything, although one man cleared his throat as if he'd like to speak.

"You're in closer touch with the hands than I am, so I'm going to trust you to select the least efficient to go." He shed a bright smile over them. "If we all pull together, we'll get over this hump. Remember, it's always darkest just before the dawn." The foremen scowled at the cliché. But they said nothing, for when they became foremen they had thrown their lot in with management. Now they stood in the no-man's land between the labourer and the boss, befriended by neither, distrusted by both. But a man had to live; he had to get on if he could. Of the six who had been foremen for years, each knew in the secrecy of his heart that some day he, too, would move up to management and come to work in a blue serge suit and a white starched collar. They had to know this, for it was their justification for what they did: the balm in no-man's land.

Andrew Hawkes, being new to no-man's land, assumed mistakenly that it was part of the foreman's job to advise management, tactfully, of its errors before they caused harm. "It won't work, I'm afraid, sir. The men will resent it."

Lucian raised a quizzical eyebrow. "Really, Hawkes? I'm sorry to hear that, but anyone who does resent it is free to leave. A weaver worth his salt will realize he can raise his wages appreciably by taking on two more looms."

There was a subtle matter of principle here that went beyond the jobs involved. The management, by laying off a fifth of the weavers, saved their base pay; but what it gave the remaining weavers on their

extra yardage was a mere fraction of this. Twenty per cent more work, but not twenty per cent more pay. As an old union man, Andrew called this chiselling. It wasn't an honest pay cut, nor an honest lay-off, nor an honest increase in hours, all of which the unions could deal with. It was a sniping action from the rear, aimed at the weavers who, if they went out on strike, would bring the animosity of all the other unions down on themselves for trying to close the mills. There were five unions: the weavers, the spinners, the loom-fixers, the slasher tenders, and the carders. In the disastrous strike of the mule spinners, they'd learned that any union striking alone could be broken.

He couldn't say all this to Lucian, who knew it as well as he did, but he could say something else. "It won't work, sir. Production will fall. A man can't operate more than eight looms without wasting the machines. If he works ten, his piece output will drop, maybe to even less than he could get out of eight if he's tired enough. Then the costs go up on each piece, and it'll put us in a tighter spot than we are now. Besides the help being resentful."

"Very interesting, Hawkes, if true. But the Association has gone into the matter rather carefully, and they don't find it true. So suppose you just leave these fine points to management—after all, when a man's put his capital into a business it isn't likely he'd overlook anything so obvious *you* can see it."

One of the older men cast an uneasy glance at Andrew. It made him uncomfortable to hear anyone talking up to the boss. Another tittered vaguely at what he understood to be Lucian's joke at Andrew's expense. The others, now slightly red in the face, continued to gaze stubbornly at the floor.

What Lucian ordered was done. What Andrew had predicted came to pass. In a few weeks, although every loom was threaded, production fell by slightly more than twenty per cent, and defective yardage increased alarmingly. Lucian was allowed only ten per cent. seconds on his contracts; when they ran to twenty per cent he risked cancellation of even his few remaining orders.

At its spring meeting his board of directors was unable to find for a dividend of more than eight per cent, a humiliating state of affairs. Lucian might be able to brazen it out, but anyone else would have found it difficult to look his stockholders in the eye. He took another flyer in cotton, since the first flyer had been less than successful.

He was worried enough to pay an evening call on his father, pretending to be calling on his mother. No one who knew the facts (and most people did by now) attempted to call upon the elder Olneys in unison,

for Amy still was not speaking to Barnabas. Most people felt that her silence was justified, and they didn't want to embarrass her by forcing her to be polite to Barnabas. Lucian was amused by the whole thing. He thought his mother's way of coping with his father's borrowed sin was extremely quaint. It proved the old girl had good Puritan stuff in her.

After he'd spent an hour with his mother in her upstairs sitting-room, he stopped in the library to drink a glass of hot buttered rum with his father. "You holding up all right, sir? We missed you at the last Association meeting."

"I see you've cut your dividend," said Barnabas.

"Merely temporary. Times are terrible—never remember seeing conditions so bad." He noticed that Barnabas's hair was growing white—rather becoming, since his face was but little lined.

"Um. Well, you don't remember '93."

"Wouldn't be so bad if the hands would co-operate, but these damned unions give 'em ideas, make 'em sullen. Getting to be as much as a man's life is worth to go into his own weaverroom."

"Best put your weavers back, Lucian. Your dissatisfied customers are coming to me, and I don't need your help to stay in business."

"I don't agree. The Association knows what it's doing. Besides, I've got new stockholders to consider. By the way, what do you think of the market?" He meant the cotton market. Everyone always meant the cotton market.

"I do not think about it."

"Oh? Never knew you not to be in the market, sir. I was considering buying a few thousand bales of July middlings myself. With things so bad they can't get worse, it seems like a good chance."

"Suit yourself. I shall wait to see what the workers do."

Lucian laughed comfortably. "What can they do? That's a novel notion—to suppose the hands have anything to do with the price of cotton."

"Does a down mill use cotton?"

"Nobody's actually down. And if we go down, it won't be because our hands tell us to."

"If you cut wages again, Lucian, the people will strike."

"Well, a little vacation won't hurt us. Nothing chasteneth the worker like a strike. A spell of hunger makes the eye keen to detect on which side of the bread lies the butter. Well, I must be getting home. And much as I value your advice, I think I'll just go ahead and buy July middling."

Barnabas shrugged. He felt it would do Lucian no harm to lose a little money.

In July, a few days after Lucian accepted delivery on his cotton, the Association decreed a twelve and a half per cent cut in wages. On July 21 the unions met and voted to strike. By July 25 all the mills of Fall River were struck except three: the Iron Works, the Print Works, and the mills of Barnabas Olney. Lucian, who had no place to store his few thousand bales of July middling, sold them in a rapidly falling market, dropping a large slice of Adelaide's money.

The next time he saw his father, they met in the street. Barnabas did not refer to the strike, a pointed omission. Lucian said sourly, "You must have a secret wire to the inner workings of the hands. How did you know they'd strike? Cards or crystal ball?"

"I knew because if I were in their place, it is what I should have done."

"Oh, no, really, father! You can't convince me you've enough in common with a mill hand to put yourself in his place!"

"I have humanity in common with him," said Barnabas. He touched his hand negligently to his hat brim, as if Lucian were a stranger. "Good day, sir. Talking to you is a pleasure I must forgo, since my mills are not struck."

Lucian watched Barnabas stride on down Robeson Street, and he felt the poisonous pricking of humiliation, like a witch's needle. But he shrugged it off. After all, it was a waste of time to fight a duel of wits with his father, who was too simple to know it was a duel of wits.

He walked on through the town, which felt strange because it was a week-day yet no smoke billowed from the chimneys, no hum issued from the mills, no drays clogged the streets. The workers lounged against the buildings, partaking of the unaccustomed week-day air. An ice wagon creaked by, its tongs clanking, its rear dripping, single drops of water splashing on to the dust of the street. To see it made you realize it wasn't Sunday—that and the washing flapping on the lines, the white sheets glaring in the sun. Odd, how easily you got the habit of working, even when you didn't like work; and how strangely guilty you felt when you walked the daytime streets on a week-day and felt the wicked somnolent doze of the town, somnolence oozing laziness as on a sleepy Sunday afternoon. The sense that another working day was sliding by in idleness, no money earned, oppressed Lucian with a solid bourgeois guilt.

Well, they wouldn't go back to work until they were good and hungry, that was sure. At least he could do one thing, as long as he'd



walked all the way into town. He'd stop and see Bailey Philpott, talk him into going to Kitty McCarran about the mill rent. A struck mill couldn't be expected to pay land and water rents. He went over the lease contract in his mind—pretty tight, it was, and if the girl had any brains he'd never get out of it. But of course she hadn't. Bailey would talk her out of the money. Good old Bailey Philpott. Lucian swung his cane smartly. He was lucky to have such a lawyer. Lucky? No, clever. A man with brains selects men with brains to serve him, then gives them their head.

Thus Lucian, walking through the town in which a hundred idle mill buildings ogled him and the knots of idle men looked at the ground as he passed. There was really nothing to worry about, he thought, as he walked smartly down Main Street in the first week of the Long Strike of 1904.

4

Silence Bess was attending a suffragette rally in Boston when the strike began. She took the first train home, her social ire aroused. She stopped at her own house long enough to fling open the windows, to loosen her corset and shed two of her petticoats, and to change her travelling suit for a cotton dress. Then she went across the fields to Kitty McCarran's.

She plopped herself down in a chair in the kitchen, where Kitty was kneading bread. "Well, is anybody doing anything about it?"

"About what?"

"The strike, of course. Anybody set up a soup kitchen yet?"

"Not that I know of. Why should they?"

Little Rafe was dragging his fuzzy lamb around the kitchen. He now stood up, walked sedately to Silence, and stood unsteadily beside her chair. She picked him up. "Hello, lover. You been a good boy?"

He snuggled against her. He was a pretty child. Already he had the Olney look, except for his eyes, which were deep blue like Kitty's and not inclined to squint like the Olney eyes. Silence talked over his head. "That Pugh girl's pregnant again. Which means she won't show her face outdoors even in genteel society, let alone in a soup kitchen. If she doesn't set up one for Lucian's hands, I don't know who will, unless it's us."

Kitty patted the dough into neat loaves. "Miss Bess, I can't understand why, when a man's hands strike on him, his wife should set out

to feed them. Sure they'll never go back to work if they get fed for nothing!"

"They'll just get fed enough to tantalize 'em. Funny thing about us Yankees. We have a notion that to keep a man half starved all the time is as good for his soul as it is for our pocketbooks. But just let him begin to starve totally, and we break out all over with a rash of righteousness. The clarion call of charity, and we're as skittish as a bunch of brood mares hearing the stallion neigh."

Kitty shuddered slightly. It was her opinion that Miss Bess said some very vulgar things for a maiden lady. "Charity never hurt anybody."

"It hurts everybody. There's always something rotten at the bottom of it if you look far enough down. In a decent society nobody would need charity."

Such a remark bordered on blasphemy. Miss Bess was a lot like Philip Hawkes or old Rafe McCarran. A socialist at heart, a dangerous radical. "God just intends some people to be poor, Miss Bess. And charity's the *duty* of the rich. 'Tis faith *and* works a man needs for the salvation of his soul."

Silence muttered something under her breath. It sounded like a crude four-letter word, but of course it couldn't have been. "The notions men shove off on God! And what a system, made in heaven, that ordains half the people shall live in misery so the other half can save their souls by feeding the first half watered-down soup! Well, I don't know what it's all about, and soup isn't my line anyhow, but we have to see these strikers get fed." She shifted Rafe, who had fallen asleep, so that his weight rested on her other arm. "Anybody who's willing to stand up to Ezra Pugh and make him squirm, I'm with 'em all the way."

Kitty poured water over the tea and fetched a plate of cookies from the pantry. "Mr. Bailey Philpott came yesterday. He told me the mill can't pay the rent now, being struck and all. He says 'tis costing thousands of dollars a day to be struck, and if they add the rent to that it'll put them in bankruptcy, or maybe worse."

Silence laughed. "And what did you say?"

A sullen expression crossed Kitty's face. Her mouth drew down at the corners, and her eyes held a withdrawn, brooding look. Privately Silence called this Kitty's "money expression". It was not so much greedy as wary, and there was an element of fright in it. "I said I'd bills to pay and so must have the money when it's due."

"Well, you can hope they won't pay, but of course they will if you don't sign any of their rotten papers to release them."

"Oh, 'twould be awful if they didn't pay! And the truth is, if you feed the strikers they'll never go back to work and I'll be out my rent and no help for it. So I wish you wouldn't——"

"Don't be simple, Kitty. If they don't pay, you take over the buildings. So don't worry—they'll pay."

Kitty's face grew dreamy with a faraway look of longing. "And now, Miss Bess, what use would the buildings be to me?"

"Same use they are to anybody. You could hire that bright Philip Hawkes to run 'em—he couldn't do a worse job than Lucian. Well, I can't sit here all day chattering. Wish I could think of someone to help us out here. I wouldn't go to the Pugh girl even if she weren't pregnant. Think it'd do any good to see the Bishop of St. Mary's?"

"Oh, yes! He's a saint on earth, is Bishop Stang." Kitty stirred her tea absently. "You might—well, she's a queer one to think of, but maybe the Hawkes boy's Aunt. . . . Since I had all this disgrace I haven't seen her, but Philip told me she's married that Jewish man, and——"

"Haven't the least idea who she is, but that doesn't matter if she'll help. Come on. We'll hitch up your horse and get going."

Kitty hesitated a moment. Then she said, "I can't go without changing my dress."

"All right, but make it quick. We've no time to waste."

Kitty laced her corset tight and slipped into a new blue foulard frock. She was not dressing so carefully for Minerva Hawkes' sharp eyes, but for Philip, far away in Lowell. As long as his job installing Lucian's machinery had lasted, he had come to see her every night, going away just before dawn. It had been a happy fortnight for Kitty, a honeymoon from worry, and—strangely enough, since she was once more being sinful—a honeymoon from guilt. Even the fear that she might have another baby had not troubled her unduly, because then Philip would surely marry her, though he insisted that he wouldn't. She knew instinctively that Philip would be unable to behave in such a crisis as Lucian had behaved. But Philip also lacked Lucian's aptitude for accidents: he'd seen to it that Kitty would not become pregnant.

He had not written her after he returned to Lowell. He never wrote her, and when she asked him why—on one of the occasions when he appeared unexpectedly—he'd said because they really didn't have anything to write about. But there was no doubt at all that Minerva would let him know how pretty Kitty looked.

Rubashevski's was a dim emporium on South Main Street, not too different from the store where Kitty had first seen Mr. Rubashevski and his daughter, Leah. The merchandise was new, but it still consisted of odds and ends of this and that: a collection in which a person might find every size shoes or shirts but his own, every kind of pot or dish but the kind he was looking for, every colour cloth but the one his wife wanted. Yet Rubashevski's did a thriving business. It appealed to the adventurous as a place where you might find anything if you went there often enough and pawed through the merchandise patiently enough. Also, the proprietors understood their customers. Here you could buy things by paying for them twenty-five cents at a time, like getting yourself out from under a doctor's bill or keeping an account at the grocers, and nobody made you feel it was a disgrace.

Kitty McCarran thought it was an awful place. Silence Bess, who had never been in such a store before, thought it was wonderful, and she could hardly talk coherently to Minerva, she was so busy rooting around in the merchandise. She bought a bolt of sheeting (seconds), some iron muffin pans, a straw gardening hat, a chamber pot, a sack of yellow-eyed beans, black lisle stockings, a rag doll for Rafe, seven dozen clothes pins, and a screw-driver.

"Well, Kitty, it's high time you brought your son around to see me," said Minerva. She was considerably smarter than she had been in the old days, but she still gave the impression that she really did not care what she wore so long as it covered her. Her brown hair was turning grey, which softened her horsy features, and her air of authority was not nearly so misplaced as it had seemed when she pushed a cart from trash can to trash can. "Anton, you remember Kitty McCarran. She was with me when I brought the statue."

He bowed in a courtly manner. "I could never forget so beautiful a face. And this is your son? You must be proud of him!"

Leah was now about eighteen, with a serene manner and a faintly exotic air. She would have looked Oriental had it not been for her blue eyes and her coils of auburn hair dressed in a pompadour. Her skin was creamy, her eyes almond-shaped, her brows and lashes very dark. Despite the rigours of the Gibson girl shirtwaist and skirt, she moved with lissom grace. She said, "I remember how envious I was of you when I first saw you, Miss McCarran. I was so gawky and ugly,

and I felt so Jewish and left out of things, living down there on Pearl Street. And you were so perfect——”

Kitty smiled, her heart thawing. Philip was right—she should have come here long ago. “I’d only been in town a couple of days and I was scared to death. But you’ve grown up since then.”

“Thank goodness! And you know, I’m going to Vassar next fall! Can you feature it? Me, at Vassar?”

Kitty did not know whether Vassar was a town, an institution, or some place in Europe. She was inclined to think the last-named, which meant Rubashevski must be making a lot of money. “All that way? I should think your father would worry.”

“There’s no place much nearer. He’s not a bit old-fashioned. He’s even going to take me up to Boston to buy clothes, but I suppose with the strike on—oh, well, if you keep Mrs. Riggs in line, so she sticks to the pictures, her clothes don’t come out too awfully tacky.”

“But the strike isn’t your business.”

“We can’t sell anything with a strike on, and Papa and Mama will start giving things away, especially if it lasts long. They can’t stand seeing anyone without. Why, there’s Philip!”

Philip Hawkes entered the store as if it were his home. He was dressed in a blue serge suit, white shirt, modest tie, and he would have been indistinguishable from any of the blue-serged managerial class except that he wore a cap. His arrival broke up the conference between Minerva and Miss Bess.

“You on strike up there, too, Philip?” said Minerva.

“No. Mr. Barnabas Olney ordered some automatics, and I came down to install them, but he’s gone to New Bedford and the superintendent won’t let me put ’em in till he gets back. Oh, hello, Kitty! I didn’t see you back there.”

“How are you, Philip?” she said primly.

He pulled everyone into one group. They all stood there talking about the strike, Mr. Rubashevski’s business, and some book Leah was reading—things Kitty was not interested in. Philip did not even notice that she was wearing a new dress. Sudden resentment of him flared up in her and carried over to the rest. So smug they were, with their suffrage, their strike, their shoddy little business, their books! What did Philip think she was, anyhow? Some whore, into whose bed he could crawl whenever he came to town, and then disown her in public? She was sick and tired of the whole mess, of all the furtiveness and disgrace. And she thought, with sudden conviction, that she wouldn’t stand for it much longer.

She picked up Rafe, who was playing a game with himself that involved crawling methodically back and forth under a rack of overcoats. "I must get home. I have to see to——"

"But you just came!" protested Minerva. "Please, Kitty! I was just going to make us all some tea."

"I really can't stay. I've bread rising at home."

Silence said, "I'm not ready to go yet, Kitty. So if you'll just take this stuff along—maybe you'll put it in the buggy, Philip——" As he went out with his arms full of her purchases, she turned to Minerva. "You know, Mrs. Rubashevski, quite aside from this strike, I think we can use you in the Fight."

"Oh, Lord," groaned Philip, helping Kitty into her buggy. "There goes Aunt Minerva. She was born to be a suffragette, no doubt about it."

"I think it's very silly and undignified," said Kitty coldly.

"You do, eh? Well, I meant it as a compliment. Miss Bess and Aunt Minerva are a couple of grand old girls, and I have a world of respect for both of them. Haven't you?"

"Oh, of course. They're very good, I'm sure. Are you coming out tonight?"

"I may," he answered evasively. "I thought I might take Aunt Minerva and Leah on the trolley ride to Newport."

"Well, you can do as you please, I suppose, now you've got to be so grand." She slapped the reins down hard on the horse's back, and the buggy lunged forward.

When Philip re-entered the store, Minerva said, "Kind of touchy, isn't she?"

"She's a little afraid of people. She doesn't have a very happy life."

"No, I suppose not. But she's changed—bound to, I suppose. She used to be rather pathetic. Now—Philip, does it strike you she's getting a little hard?"

"She's terribly lonely," said Philip.

"Poor thing!" said Minerva. "But it's still true that uppity manners don't cure loneliness."

"It's no joke, the situation she's in."

"I didn't mean to suggest it was," said Minerva. "I'll go see her the first chance I get. And that surely is a sweet baby."

She went into the back room to prepare the tea, and she gave sober consideration to Kitty. There was something about the girl now that distressed Minerva. She had stood in the store, a little apart from all of them, and Minerva, looking at her, had surprised a strange expression

on her face, as if she hated all of them. Had she done what the unfortunate often do, twisted her hatred of one or two people into hatred of the whole human race? Then, quickly, Minerva reproached herself. She should have gone to see Kitty long ago. It wasn't fair the way they'd all ignored her.

Then Minerva diverted her thoughts to Silence, whom she found pleasant. Wouldn't hurt to look into that woman's suffrage business. Politics could do with a little female leavening. "Or I'm very much mistaken," thought Minerva, slicing the lemon with decision.

6

Kitty had never minded the tenements that grew up around Lucian's mill and which had already taken on the character of slums, but as the strike wore on they became obnoxious to her. Tenements deserted all day except for a few little children, old people, and women in late pregnancy were very different from the same places swarming with idle men and half-grown children who trespassed on her property, led Rafe into mischief, and taught him bad language. In the beginning they wandered vaguely over her land, bewildered by the time on their hands, and when she ordered them off they would look at her obliquely and sullenly move away. Finally, however, they learned that it was fun to wade in her brook, to rob her hen house, to tease her horse and cow, to chase her heifer, to steal her apples, and to pick the vegetables from her garden. Whereas in the beginning they had obeyed her because she spoke with the rich voice of authority, they learned in time that she wasn't the real thing. She was Barnabas Olney's kept woman, nothing but a whore, and her kid was a bastard, and she'd disgraced the whole Hawkes family something awful.

When the fall came, with the long hazy days, and the ripe apples, and the big yellow moons hanging low in the sky, they could stand up to her. If she squawked because they took her apples, they told her to go to hell. If she caught them in her hen-house, their hands full of eggs, they'd as soon throw one at her as to look at her. If that little bastard of hers yelled when they took his toys, they'd smack him and make him yell louder. What business did a bastard have with toys anyhow?

Oh, they saw through her all right. Flaunting her buggy and her horse and her fancy clothes like she had a right to them, like maybe she'd done a lick of work for them. "My land," she said. "My house,

my horse, my hens, my buggy." Hoity-toity. Lording it over decent people.

Led on by daring adolescents, the children began to scrawl misspelled obscenities on her barn, to cake mud over her windows, to throw filth on her clean washing. They'd have been pleased to know how often she lay awake at night, listening for the sounds of their prowling, and how often she cried herself to sleep, holding Rafe tight in her arms to protect him.

The children could not have thought of it themselves, she reasoned. People like Rosie Hawkes spread tales and egged the children on to torment her. Silence Bess admitted there was a lot of loose talk, since the people had nothing to do but talk. "But I don't think the parents are egging their children on, Kitty. It's just the older ones trying to be smart. And it won't last much longer—the strike's bound to be settled any day. Ezra Pugh's getting worried now that the unions have started a regular courier service and the strikers are getting money every week from the silk weavers down in Paterson. Good heavens, it's more than two months, almost three, since they went out! But I do think maybe you'd better not go to the soup kitchens any more. Did Mr. Rubashevski bring those sweaters you ordered?"

"I sent them back. I won't buy them now."

"But you must, Kitty! None of the rest of us can pay for them. And it's getting cold. The people——"

"They can freeze! They'll get no sweaters from me, and no more food either, except what they steal, damn their black souls!"

"Kitty, you can't stop helping just because a few kids get ornery. These people are starving!"

"They tried to kill Rafe yesterday," said Kitty sullenly. "Four big ones got him and tied him to a plank and jounced him 'round the yard, yelling they'd tarred and feathered him and were riding him on a rail. I had to lay into 'em with sticks to get 'em to stop. Them and their dirty strike—keeping me from my rent money, that's what they're doing." Her voice rose shrilly, the peasant screaming. "It's that Rosie Hawkes set 'em on me, may she rot!"

"They've no right to jump on Rafe. I'll talk to the police."

"Police! They're in it with the rest. I talked to one of 'em myself. 'There's nothing I can do, Miss McCarran,' he says, him and his black heart. 'Tis naught but a bunch of kids now, and me and the rest, we've got our hands full seeing they do no damage to the mill.'"

"Maybe if I spoke to Lucian——"



"Don't you dare! I'll not have him coming here, lording it over me!"

"But you can't keep Rafe a prisoner just because——"

"There you're right. I can't. But he's mine, and I'll take care of him, beholden to nobody. From now on, anybody sets foot on my place, I'll shoot 'em."

Even if Kitty had shown Silence the shotgun she'd bought, Silence would not have believed her. "Please try to be patient, Kitty. Hungry people can get pretty uncivilized."

Kitty leaned forward, her large eyes fixed intently on Silence's homely, motherly face. The firelight flickered over Kitty's eyes, giving them a wild, mad look. But her voice was low, controlled, icy with hatred, and this made what she said more gruesome than if she had shouted. "Yes. And the long loneliness can make even a green girl uncivilized, Miss Bess. Tell them. Tell them I'm no more the green girl that will cry her eyes out for lack of a decent word. I've had my time to think in the black nights, Miss Bess. And there's many an hour I've spent on my cold knees praying for the pity and mercy they couldn't wring from their stony hearts. And now I tell you, I'm through with the lot of them. 'Tis no more mourning I'll do for the lack of their kindness, and you can tell them they can give over expecting kindness from me. There's limits to the human heart, and there's a time comes when you have to dig your way out from under the mound of suffering, Miss Bess, or you die the death. It isn't in my mind now to die. So I'm giving over the suffering, for all it was the glory of the Lord Jesus and His saints. And from the hour I beat the hoodlums off yesterday, it's been a knowledge in me that never again shall I suffer for one of them, nor a tear of mine fall on their graves. I have a way to go, and the way is to take care of me and mine, for I know true and deep inside myself that if ever I stumble again they'll pound my brains out with the stones of their spite. So they're starving, you say, and I should help them. And I say, let them go back to work then, where they belong. And give me the rent that's due me."

Silence sat still, horrified, and spellbound by the lush Irish rhetoric. The fire cracked, spitting out sparks from a broken log, and she laughed nervously. "You don't mean that, Kitty. You——"

"You think not? There's a mightiness in the Irish spite that maybe you haven't got hold of yet, Miss Bess. 'Tis many a century since the cursing of Tara, but it lies there yet, keening in its ruins, still cursed."

"You believe that superstitious nonsense?" said Silence sharply.

"And my father—oh, he was a poor thing, Miss Bess, and some, like you Yankees, would say he'd got as low as a man could sink, for he was nothing but a bag of bones with a rag of trousers over them, and naught on earth but the whisky in his veins kept propping him up. He died on a filthy waterfront from his head being bashed in, but he saved one breath to the last to curse the Pope with, God forgive him. And I'm thinking now if there's one splinter of his bones gone into the making of my own, I can stand against this town and the snivelling rats you call its people. If they want my charity, they'll get it only with my curses, for I hate the lot of 'em. And you can tell 'em that, too, if you've a mind to." And she laughed, a low, malevolent chuckle that Silence found extremely primitive and disagreeable.

The next day, when some big boys crossed her yard, Kitty fired buckshot at them. After that, they left her alone in the daytime, but during the night their depredations were worse than ever, and the legends scrawled on her outbuildings became more obscene. One night they stole all her hens. Another night they tore her privy to pieces. She bought a mastiff and turned it loose at night. Then, after a boy had been badly chewed, they let her alone. But by then it was November. The strike was four months old, and Kitty's hatred of them was like an open pit, yawning and black.

On Thanksgiving Day Philip came to see her. He said, "Rosie's baby has diphtheria, and there's no money for the doctor or the medicine, and they've no heat in the house. I'm taking up a collection."

Kitty gave him ten dollars. But not for the sake of the baby. Philip had asked for money, and she gave him money. In spite of her brave, bitter words, she was not yet ready to lose Philip.

"You'll come back later?" she asked.

"I doubt if I can. After I get the doctor for the baby I'm going to help Aunt Minerva and Leah collect food and clothes. Then we have to take them to the various union halls. Why don't you hitch up your buggy and come along? We can use all hands."

"Oh, I can't, Philip! I've nobody to leave Rafe with."

"Then I wonder—may I borrow the buggy? It would help a lot."

"Sure now! Take it. I'll call the dog in so you can get it."

He'd have to come back, she thought, to return the buggy. While she waited she passed the time writing a letter to Mr. Philpott demanding the land and water rent without delay. She cooked and ate a lonesome supper. Then she bathed Rafe, played with him a while, and put him to bed. Still Philip did not come. She waited by the fire until midnight. Then she went to bed and cried herself to sleep.

Andrew hated to go home, yet when a man wasn't working and had no money he couldn't stay out all day and all night. It was hard on Rosie, too; no doubt harder than for himself. She didn't have the union meetings nor the regular trips down to Paterson to collect the relief money from the silk weavers. Andrew felt guilty because he was doing things he'd never had time to do before, and he found them stimulating. He liked meeting new people, going to strange towns, haranguing the union meetings. He'd even been on one of the delegations sent to Governor Douglas who was investigating the conditions that had led to the strike and was trying to find a way to settle it. These were important activities. Andrew sometimes caught himself thinking of them as "grown-up activities". But however he thought about them, they made a new life that Rosie did not share. In the five months since the strike began he had learned to live a double life, and he liked the new half better than the old.

It was all wrong and backwards, crazy, but Andrew blessed the strike. A turning point, he called it—though of course not to Rosie; and he could not yet say toward what it had turned him. The vista of freedom it had opened to him was still too new to be appraised. Dark in his mind, unspoken, lay the suspicion that if he hadn't married he might have discovered it much sooner. Philip had got away. Perhaps—— Hurriedly he dropped the suspicion and the speculation to which it led. Done was done, as Aunt Minerva would say. He went about his grown-up activities, guilty, feeling much as if he were keeping another woman. Or perhaps it was more like being a secret drunkard; for he had made the discovery that he had power over men, that he could talk them into things, and that was intoxicating. Rosie would never understand it nor believe in it. But the truth was, men liked him, trusted him, looked up to him. To discover that was important, even if it cost five months of semi-starvation on charity soup and relief money.

Despondent men came to the union meetings. They were ready to throw in the sponge. There were others besides Andrew who could swing them around, but only by whipping up their emotions. Andrew appealed to their reason. He gave them facts about mill profits and losses, about the desperation of men like Lucian Olney, shoe-string operators who were being pushed into ruin. He argued that they were bound to win if they held out because they had less to lose than

their employers. They couldn't lose thousands of dollars a day in forfeited contracts, perhaps gone South for good. They weren't watching taxes eat up the substance of the idle mills. "All we can lose is seven or eight dollars a week," he'd say. If some heckler reminded him that they were hungry, he'd answer, "You were always hungry. You were just so busy you didn't have time to notice it before."

Others treated them like an aggregate of fools who could feel but never think. Their employers assumed they must be stupid because they were millhands. Even their wives tacitly assumed they must be fools because they did not make money. Only Andrew treated them like thinking individuals. He made them feel that theirs was the burden of decision: that they were free men. He gave them courage and hope, not because they might be lucky but because they could solve problems by taking thought about them.

There is no flattery more cogent than the appeal to reason. They returned his compliment in kind. They listened to him because he was "smart". They forgave him for rising to be a foreman because he'd got the job not through boot-licking or betrayal but because he was "smart". They were tremendously relieved to find such a man among themselves. He could see the Governor in their behalf, decide what they must do about this and that, argue with the boss for them when the need arose. For although it was undeniably a sweet sensation to be told that they could think, there wasn't any special reason to wear themselves out doing it.

Having accepted their trust, and still groggy with power, Andrew would go home to Rosie. In the early days of the strike he had burst into the tenement and tried to tell her everything; but as the winter wore on there seemed to be less and less use in trying to make her understand. Now, with a hungry Christmas approaching, he would sometimes stand a long while outside the tenement, shivering in the cold, waiting until the wind bit into him so cruelly that even entering his own house was better than enduring it longer. He would slip in furtively, softly closing the door, hoping that Rosie was asleep.

Of all his harried entrances, the one on Christmas Eve was the worst. Rosie was waiting up for him, although it was after ten. Andrew had spent the past two days in Paterson and Passaic collecting relief money, and he'd had to take the train home, despite the expense, in order to get back in time for the unions to distribute it for Christmas. Rosie said, "Well! I must say I didn't expect to see you again."

He went into the kitchen to warm himself at the meagre fire. She trailed after him, dragging her feet in their worn felt slippers. She was

wearing the velvet coat Minerva and Mrs. McCarran had given her three Christmasses before. Its nap was now worn smooth, but it was better than nothing in the cold house. Andrew sat down wearily. "I brought you some woollen goods from Passaic. To make dresses for you and Kathy."

"Stealing the union's money to throw away on wool, I suppose."

"The man I stay with down there, his wife gave it to me. His boss gives them millends sometimes, and she thought you could use it. She said she's so fat the pieces are too small to fit her." He tried to hand the bundle to Rosie.

"Probably just grey goods. All right for starving strikers' wives, but not good enough for her." Rosie did not take the bundle. He set it down on the floor again.

"Well, it's a finishing plant they work in. She's a nice woman, been awfully kind to me, she and her husband. I don't think——"

"Everybody's awfully kind to you, aren't they? No wonder you never come home. Why don't you just pack your bags and move down to New Jersey for keeps? You're not doing anything here but make trouble for everybody, you and your damned strike. Been over months ago if it hadn't been for you."

He looked at her with detachment. It was hard to believe that only four years ago he'd been eating his heart out for love of Rosie Donovan, with her curly hair and pretty, china-doll face. Old scenes rose before his mind stiffly, like pictures in a half-forgotten storybook: the fights to overcome Aunt Minerva's resistance to his marriage with a Papist, the dodges he'd used to catch a glimpse of Rosie at the mill, courtship scenes, tender, hungry, wistful, and the arguments with Philip and Aunt Minerva about the worry and responsibility Mrs. McCarran would be to all of them. He sighed. "Have we any tea, Rosie? I'm cold all through."

"No, we haven't any tea. Costs money, tea does. Unless there's some in the basket, of course. But not being my basket, I don't meddle with what don't belong to me."

He saw the basket on the floor near the sink. "Mr. Olney sent it to Gramma?"

"Um. Of course it could just barely be possible if you hadn't been so dumb and quit the old mill, he might of sent one to us. But seeing you don't have the sense you were born with and you don't care any more for your family than if they was so much dirt, he sent it to Gramma. If you want to steal her tea, go ahead."

Every day since the strike had begun Rosie had reminded Andrew

that if he hadn't got above himself and tried to be a foreman for Mr. Lucian, he'd be working that very minute. Andrew had long since stopped pointing out that he'd made the change because she wouldn't let him do anything else. He poked around in Mrs. McCarran's basket, found the tea and helped himself to an apple. "I don't think Gramma would grudge me an apple. Shall I wake her up and ask her?"

"She's not here. Maybe if you stayed home once in a——"

"Where is she?" he asked sharply. "What's she doing out alone this time of night?"

"How do I know? With Kathy to watch, you expect I can go traipsing after her? She took the dinner pails this noon, and nothing in 'em but a couple of pieces of stale bread, thanks to you, and that's the last I seen of her." Rosie began to cry, but the tears were separate things, falling in a world of grief that had nothing to do with Rosie's unchanged voice and her mocking, bitter face. "She's dead, lying dead in the road some place. You killed my baby with your devilish strike, and now you killed Gramma, and she's just a poor old soul that anybody'd pity——"

"I'll bet those damned watchmen wouldn't let her in the mill again." Andrew stood up, reluctant to go out to look for the old woman, knowing he had to go. Usually the watchmen at the struck mill let her wander through the empty building, but occasionally Mr. Lucian or Mr. Philpott heard about it and gave fresh orders that no one must enter, though it was hard to see what harm a queer old woman could do, with her brain so addled that strong men couldn't look her in the eye. It wasn't the watchmen's fault if they couldn't let her in and she started off to town, walking all the way to the old Olney mill unless someone stopped her.

Andrew didn't know how often this had happened since the strike began. He wasn't even sure that Gramma hadn't gone sometimes before the strike, because she didn't trust the new mill. She found it vaguely wrong, and she complained in a puzzled voice that she didn't see why her girls had ever gone to work there when the old mill was so much nicer, and the old tenement, too, because this tenement was nothing but a barn with the wind blowing through the walls. But on every other occasion when she'd trudged the seven miles to the old mill and the seven miles back, she had got home long before this hour of the night.

"I'll go find her—don't wait up for me, no telling how long it'll take. I'll borrow Kitty's horse and buggy, and that way——"

"You'll do no such thing, Andrew Hawkes! You set foot in that woman's house, and I'll——"

"Rosie, Gramma's Kitty's aunt, and she's got as much right to know the old lady's lost as you have. The time I can save may mean the difference between life and——"

"Don't you dare go near her, Andrew! Coming in here this morning, dressed in her fancy clothes, lording it over Gramma and me as if we was dirt, and I says to her the minute I opened the door, 'Get out, you filthy whore, you,' and she says, 'I'm your landlady now, Rosie,' and she was smirking like the cat that got the fish. 'And I'm only doing my duty coming to inspect the place, seeing I own it, and maybe you need something done in it I should attend to.' A lot she'll attend to, I'll bet!"

Andrew stood transfixed as the tirade poured from Rosie. "You say she *owns* this tenement?"

"*She* claims she owns it, and we can thank you and your damned double damned strike for that, too! Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, if I had a nickel for every time you've brought grief and harm and death to somebody with your——"

"Rosie! Talk sense! If Kitty owns this tenement it's got nothing to do with the strike!"

"Oh, hasn't it though! Why couldn't Mr. Lucian pay his rent to her, except you downed the mill? So she writes him a hoity-toity letter, imagine that whore, his own father's kept woman, and she says if he doesn't pay up by the last day of December, she'll foreclose on the mill, and——"

"Did she tell you all this?"

"Not much! Not her, she didn't, but I got it from Mrs. Shaughnessy who got it from Mrs. Moran and she got it straight from Mr. Honeyman, and *he* said she threw the fear of God into Mr. Lucian proper, because he's just about ruined from the strike, and besides, Mr. Honeyman says he dropped a pile of his wife's money playing the cotton market, so he deeded this tenement over to Kitty, may God forgive me for letting her dirty name pass my lips, and he said——"

"All right, all right! She's still the only person we know with a horse and buggy, and finding Gramma's a damned sight more important than your silly pride." He strode from the house, slamming the door.

But as it happened, he didn't need the buggy. He knocked on Kitty's door and said, "Merry Christmas, Kitty. Look, I need your help. Gramma——"

"She's here, Andrew. I've been trying to get her to go home for hours, but she won't. She thinks I'm Mary again, and she's wandering something awful. Oh, please come in."

He stepped into the kitchen entry, and through the open door he saw Gramma sitting contentedly by the fire, a cup of tea in her hand and a beatific smile on her face.

Kitty said, "I drove Miss Bess into town this afternoon, and on the way back I saw Gramma dragging along, dead beat and cold. 'Twas only decent to ask her in, and now she thinks she lives here, Andrew——"

"We were awfully worried. Rosie can't stand much more, and if anything happened to Gramma——"

"It's a sad thing, but maybe she'll go when she sees you."

But she wouldn't. She knew Andrew and called him by name, but she also seemed to think that he was a young man come courting her daughter Mary. She offered him tea and cookies, playing the hostess. She was impervious to suggestions that she leave. She treated them sometimes as if they were social slips and sometimes as if she were deaf. When Kitty's mantel clock chimed twelve, she stood up, dismissing Andrew royally. "'Twas a pleasure indeed to see you this night, Andrew, and what a pity you'll be leaving now, but my Mary must get her beauty sleep, and you've a hard day yourself tomorrow, if I don't mistake."

Andrew looked helplessly at Kitty, who said, "It's no use, Andrew. Let her stay the night here. Perhaps tomorrow she'll remember to go home."

"Rosie's not going to like this. But at least she's warm here. We call her crazy, but she's the only one who's had sense enough to get out of that barn we live in and go where it's comfortable."

"There's plenty of wood in the shed, Andrew. Help yourself."

"Rosie would rather freeze than get warm with your wood, Kitty, and you know it as well as I do, or I wouldn't say it."

"Tell her you got it from Miss Bess. I'll go with you so the dog doesn't bother you." She threw a shawl over her head and went out with him. She felt a warm glow because she was doing something that would gall Rosie unendurably if Rosie knew about it. She wondered how long Aunt Bridie would stay. Perhaps always? Of course there were two sides to it. An old crazy woman could be an awful nuisance. But she'd be a help in the house, and with Rafe. Perhaps Kitty might even go out at night sometimes, to the theatre, or to eat in some grand



restaurant. She could go to places where real society people like the Olneys went. And then perhaps she'd meet a rich man. . . .

"Fill the wheel-barrow up, Andrew. You can bring it back in the morning."

The strike was settled in 1905 by the Governor's intervention. The weavers got a new wage scale figured on a complex piece and cost basis, which brought them a little more money. The manufacturers were disgruntled at the unwarranted government interference. No one was really satisfied but Kitty McCarran, who had acquired a tenement from every one else's misfortune.

## PART FIVE

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### The Boy

The boy was never able to say when he discovered that something was wrong with him: perhaps he had been born knowing it. For years, however, he did not know what was wrong with him, but only that he was different from other people. When he was still small he would go into his mother's room and look at himself in the tall mirror. He would turn every which way, soberly studying himself, wrinkling his brow in worry. He could not see his back: perhaps his wrongness was there. He would feel it with his hands, looking for bumps or declivities to explain the monstrosity he was sure was his. When he found nothing, he would frown dubiously at his reflection, not reassured, and he would say, "Well, anyhow, my name is Rafe McCarran." He thought this should comfort him, but it did not.

He would find quiet places, out of his mother's way, and he would sit still, thinking. The problem he must solve was clear: he must learn to turn himself inside out. The trouble must lie inside himself. He tried to turn his toys inside out to practise how it was done. He had a toy monkey with whom he held long conversations. His name was Alex, King of the Monkeys, and he'd had an adventurous life about which he told Rafe when they were alone together. One day Rafe asked Alex if he'd mind being turned inside out, and Alex said he wouldn't, so Rafe found a way. Sawdust came out. Alex's insides were clean and fuzzy, new compared to his outsides. Different, too, being without eyes or nose or mouth. It was a terrible thing to find Alex so different inside, so blind and speechless. His mother had to put Alex back together because Rafe couldn't, and he couldn't sleep without Alex. Next time he'd practise with something he didn't care so much about.

He was four when he experimented with Alex. He thought that probably when he was five he would discover the turning secret. Or perhaps when he was six they would teach it to him in school. He

must have forgotten about it by then, however, for it was not one of the things that preoccupied him in school.

Before he was able to read books he asked questions. Of everything he asked, what was inside of it? People seldom knew the answer, and so they told him silly things. Lack of wisdom flowed from the lips of those who should know, and he perceived this early. It fostered in him a suspicion of authority about which he kept silent.

He began to make things that would move, things with wheels and levers and pulleys, for what he made could certainly have no secrets from him. During the summer before he went to school he made a thing with magical properties. He cut the long flexible green stems from a wild grapevine in Aunt Silence's orchard. These he stripped, carried home, tied together in a long continuous wire, and installed all around his own farm. Electricity was in the wire. He inspected the installation every day, mending it after every storm or accident. Sometimes he would stand still a long while, lost in contemplation of the electricity hidden in the grapevine stems. He was consumed by wonder, arrested in awe, for here he had made something he did not understand. He knew the electricity was there, but he did not know what it was nor when it might reach out and attack him. He felt that it was not in the nature of electricity to be grateful to him for creating it. He admired it and revered it, but he did not trust it. Nor did he trust himself in relation to it: he loved it too much.

Aunt Silence, who wasn't really his aunt, said he played this way because he was intelligent. Aunt Minerva, who was also not his aunt, said he did it because he was lonely. Gramma, who was not really his grandmother, rocked him on her lap, told him stories, sang songs to him, and fed him cookies, and she said he bothered his head too much about things. It was odd that none of these people, the only ones he knew well, were his relations. He had no relations except his mother. He would have liked more relations, especially a man relation. But the non-related aunts and Gramma loved him. He felt it when he was with them, and he thought of them with confidence, as of people he could depend on. His mother loved him and didn't love him: he could count on her only sometimes, and he was never sure when. So often, when he needed her, she wasn't home.

His mother didn't like to be bothered because he had made her life a martyrdom. He did not understand what this meant until he went to school and the Sisters taught him about the saints and martyrs. All the martyrs except his mother were dead, killed by lions, stoned, or racked on wheels. In the pictures they streamed blood, and their faces

shone with effulgent glory because they loved the Lord. When his mother went shopping, or to the theatre, or on her rent-collecting rounds, leaving him alone, he would first be angry with her. Then he would remember her martyrdom and reproach himself because he had once inflicted wounds upon her which had subsequently got well, perhaps because, as Aunt Silence said, sanitation had made great strides in recent years. He felt guilty about his mother, and he wished he could remember when he had martyred her so he could apologize. Probably, since he couldn't remember, it had happened before she was his mother.

He asked the Sisters many questions about martyrs, and to some of them he got long, involved answers. For others he got slapped on his hands with a ruler. Once the question was so bad that Sister had locked him in a dark closet till he said a thousand Our Fathers. But he didn't say them. He just cried a while, and then he sat and thought about the electricity. And other things. He could think of quite a lot to think about.

He didn't like school. He was afraid of the Sisters. School was in town, and his mother drove him there and picked him up in the afternoon if she wasn't busy. If she was busy he had to stay with the Sisters or go to Aunt Minerva's store (when he was older), or just stand around waiting for his mother to come. He wanted to go to school in Freetown so he could walk back and forth, but that was a Protestant school, and his mother said she'd die rather than see him grow up a heretic like his grandfather, rest his soul.

He was sure the Sisters knew what was wrong with him, though, and they just wouldn't tell him. That was why he feared them.

His life was very complicated. The people who belonged to him were complicated: his beautiful, busy mother, martyred and also rich, a contradiction right there. The maid Leona, who was one of Aunt Silence's protégées, a Portuguese girl. Aunt Silence had got her from the streets during the Long Strike, which was when his mother had begun to have rents to collect and needed someone to care for him, he being but a baby then. He had to learn Portuguese to talk with Leona, and she was an unwed mother. He wasn't supposed to know that, but he did, although he didn't know what it meant. Leona's baby had died of the croup, which he wasn't supposed to know either. Leona sometimes got sad and talked about it, telling him it was God's punishment for her sin. That was a very complicated arrangement—killing someone who hadn't sinned to punish someone who had. When he pointed this out to Leona she was shocked. She said God

had His reasons. He was much interested in Leona's sin, and he asked her many questions about it, but it never seemed to him he got a straight answer.

Aunt Silence was complicated. She was always going off to battle for the Cause. She went to jail for the Cause, and when he was little he had an ambition to go to jail, too. Not until he was quite old did he discover that prison was not an end toward which most people strove.

Aunt Minerva was complicated because Mr. Rubashevski was a Jew. For years he accepted Aunt Minerva's judgment that this was something to be proud of, but he finally learned there were two sides to this also. A Jewish boy named Herbie lived near his school, and one day Herbie had a beautiful new suit. This made it necessary for everyone to throw mud at him and call him names and chase him because a dirty kike Christ-killer had no right to a new suit. Rafe didn't know why this was logical, because he was only six then, but the fury of the mob was too much to resist and to be part of it made him feel that he belonged, finally; that he was not really different, but part of great things. Therefore he also called the names and threw some mud. The next time he saw Aunt Minerva he crawled up into her lap and said, "You're a dirty kike Christ-killer, Aunt Minerva."

A thing happened which he never on earth expected to see. Aunt Minerva cried. She didn't make a sound, though. She just cried. He felt so saddened by her grief that he put his arms around her neck and kissed her. "You mustn't feel bad about it, Aunt Minerva. If you just don't get a new suit, they won't throw any mud at you."

Aunt Minerva talked to him long and soberly, as if he were grown-up. She told him about the Jews, and how they'd written the Bible, and how Jesus was a Jew, and about Mr. Rubashevski's life in Poland. He said, "We ought to cry some for Mr. Rubashevski, shouldn't we?"

She smiled and said no, we shouldn't because Mr. Rubashevski didn't hate anyone. He was strong and good and didn't need crying for. "Don't hate people because they're different from you, Rafe."

"Like Leona talking Portuguese?"

"Yes. Or Miss Bess being a suffragette."

"Or Mother because she's a martyr?"

Aunt Minerva gave him a queer look that went clear through him. "Or even that."

"But I hate the Mother Superior because she's mean."

"No. You don't hate her. You're afraid of her."

He thought that over and perceived that it was so.

"When you're afraid of something," said Aunt Minerva, "look it in the eye so you can figure out if it's worth being afraid of. No use wasting your energy fearing and hating things and people just because they're different. Now let's change the subject. How'd you like to go to a wedding?"

"What's that?"

"A celebration with a party afterwards. Ice-cream and cake. Leah's going to marry Philip Hawkes. Ever hear of him?"

Rafe shook his head.

"He's an engineer. Invents machines. Lives up in Lowell. If you'd like to meet him and come to the wedding, I'll try and arrange it with your mother."

"Yes, I'd like that." Rafe always wanted to go to anything anywhere. He liked Leah, too. She was almost the only person he knew who wasn't complicated.

The hard part of his conversation with Aunt Minerva grew foggy in his memory until years later when things happened to remind him of it: but by then he had forgotten the source of his notions about fear and hatred. What stuck in his mind always was the invitation to the wedding and his longing to partake of the ice-cream and cake. His mother wouldn't let him go. She refused flatly and absolutely, never giving any reason. He wept and prevailed not. Aunt Minerva and Aunt Silence and Leona pleaded in his behalf, but it was no use. He spent the day of the wedding, a Sunday, staring disconsolately out the window trying to imagine the unimaginable delights he was missing. His mother tried to get back into his good graces by giving him ice-cream and cake for his supper. He refused to eat any. In noble woe, lugubriously, he sat and watched the ice-cream melt on his plate.

"Please eat it, Rafe, dear. 'Tis *better* than theirs. And think of it, it's all your very own!"

"I won't! It's not better! I don't want mine, I want theirs!"

"But Rafe, it *is* better. Things that are all your very own are always better."

"They're not! They're not! It's the *wedding* makes them better! I'll never see Leah's wedding now, you—you selfish old martyr, you!" In defiance he pushed the plates, the whole soupy mess of ice-cream, on to the spotless kitchen floor. His mother then whipped him. The whole day was one he never forgot.

The person he loved with uncritical devotion was Gramma. She lived at his house only sometimes, a unique complexity unshared by anyone else. Every time she came to live at Rafe's house, Mr. Hawkes the weaver would come around to try to make her go back to his house. Rafe liked Mr. Hawkes, but secretly, because he was a Union Leader, which was something that worked against Rafe's mother's Interests. According to Mr. Philpott, who was a fat man, Mr. Hawkes worked against the welfare of all decent people. Therefore Rafe always felt a delicious tingling of lawlessness during their conversations. He pumped Gramma about Mr. Hawkes, but she behaved as if she'd never heard of him. Perhaps she was ashamed of knowing somebody who worked so hard against decent people.

To compensate for this, she knew all about Ireland and the Kings of Old and crossing the ocean, and she knew a million songs and stories, and all about high society. When Mrs. Riggs came to sew dresses for his mother, and Gramma was living with them, she and Mrs. Riggs talked all the time about society, and they had tea with the best china, and Gramma made scones, and everybody behaved like the Kings of Old, even himself. It was a pleasant game if it didn't last too long.

When Gramma lived with them his mother's name was Mary, but other times it was Kitty.

But the best thing about Gramma was that she took him to the mill. They packed two dinner pails and went all through the mill looking for Gramma's daughters. They never found Gramma's daughters, but not until he was old—say seven or eight—was he daunted by this. When he was little, Gramma managed to convey to him that it was the search that mattered, and not the result. After they left the mill, Gramma always pretended she had found her daughters, and he pretended so, too. They were equals then, walking perilously close to an unseen world. Of all his people, only Gramma knew this world existed—which is to say that Gramma was the only other child he knew.

He never betrayed Gramma, never said there was no use in taking the dinners to the mill, for her daughters were not there. It was always Gramma who gave up first. He came to know the signs and to regret them, for they meant that Gramma would soon go back to live with Mr. Hawkes, and he might not see her for months. The signs of

Gramma's giving up began with vague murmurs of discontent about the mill. She would say the old mill was better. She would say her girls must have been out of their minds to go to work in such a miserable little mill, and very likely they never would have if "that Donovan" hadn't talked them into it.

Once when they were sitting under the apple tree eating the cookies and fruit in the dinner pails, he said, "Gramma, who's that Donovan?" This was during the summer he was seven. In those lazy months of his first long vacation he saw a lot of Gramma. She pervaded that summer with her gentle vagueness, her other-worldly make-believe, so that afterwards he remembered it as "Gramma's summer."

"Tush now, hear the boy! And who would he be but your very own father? God rest his soul."

"Is he *dead*?" He was puzzled by death. He thought it would be queer to know someone dead.

Gramma nodded, her eyes cloudy and sad. "A braver man never lived than Donovan, may the Lord forgive me if I ever said ill of him in me impatience." Then Gramma told him stories of Donovan, and how he'd always wanted to go working for the railroad to get rich quick, and he'd done it one summer, and all he'd got for it was a sprained back that troubled him to his dying day.

That night he retrieved Alex the Monkey King from the toy box, feeling slightly ashamed of doing anything so childish. He discussed the problem of Donovan with Alex. If Donovan were dead, how could he tell Gramma's daughters to go work in the new mill? "Maybe they're dead, too," suggested Alex drily. Dead people talking to dead people, and Gramma seeking them, communing with them—oh, no! With his terrified rejection, the thought scurried into hiding in the darkness of his mind. He would think only about Donovan being his father. He felt no conviction about it, no real belief. But wouldn't dead Donovan be better than no father at all? No. Donovan was out of Gramma's pretending. It would be like saying Jack in the Beanstalk was his father—just idle talk. Forgetting that he was too big for Alex, he embraced the toy monkey savagely and wept his way into sleep. Fathers were too important for pretending.

The next day when they took the dinner pails he and Gramma did not start across the fields. Instead they went on to the road. They had



passed Aunt Silence's house, which was closed because she was in New York for the Cause, when he said, "Where are we going, Grammar?"

"Och, what a question! Where would we be going but the mill?"

He understood they must be going to the old mill. He felt excited. It was not all talk then. They had come to the end of pretending. Now he would see Gramma's daughters and he would never again have to think traitorously that they were dead. When they had got almost to North Main Street a farmer driving an empty wagon picked them up, and it was a good thing because he didn't see how he could have walked any farther. They sat on the high wagon seat, and he enjoyed an exalted rattling view of everything. His mother and Aunt Minerva and everybody would be surprised when he told them he'd been to the old mill. He glanced at Gramma, sitting very straight and society mannered, talking to the farmer, and he thought perhaps the whole thing, the whole bursting glory of reality revealed, should be kept a secret, always, between them. They understood what had gone before. Others did not.

When they got to the old mill it was long past the dinner hour because Gramma had not allowed enough time for so long a journey. No one stopped them from entering. There was too much noise to hear anyone speak, but people nodded and smiled at Gramma, and she nodded and smiled back. The old mill was superior in every way to the new mill. It had many buildings and many stories. It was noisier, bangier, hotter, smellier. The belts seemed bigger and higher up, the machinery seemed busier. The floors were more slippery, the stairs steeper and more worn, the wet washing smell was stronger. It was an old, old mill, that was why. All the smells, noise, lint, wetness were old, old, been here forever, caught in the air. The old mill made the new mill seem a skimpy, fly-by-night affair. He didn't blame Gramma's daughters for staying here, no matter what that Donovan said.

They went right up to the top floor, and Gramma got happier and happier. Although he could hear nothing for the banging and flapping and whirring, he knew she was singing. Then they went down all the stairs again, and through all the rooms, and Gramma peered into everybody's face with that faint little happy smile playing over her mouth. Then they were in the mill yard again, and he took a deep breath of the hot summer air that seemed cool after the mill air, and Gramma said, "Now isn't that aggravating the way they duck off? 'Tis enough to try the patience of a saint!"

He didn't know how to answer. It was odd the way he felt, mixed up relief and disappointment, because he hadn't seen Gramma's daughters after all. But he'd have to worry about it later because just then a carriage drove into the mill yard. A queer sort of man got out of it. He was tall, with all black clothes except his shirt, which was bright white. He had a queer, broad-brimmed hat, which he took off when he saw Gramma. His hair was all white, but he wasn't *really* old like Gramma. He didn't have the shrunk, caved-in look of the really old. He had sad eyes, and they looked sadder because there were smile lines in his face. Rafe felt an uncanny familiarity in his looks, as if he'd seen him before. He did not remember all the scrutiny of himself in his mother's mirror when he'd been seeking what was wrong with himself; nor did he know that the Olney look had stared back at him from the glass.

The gentleman stared at Rafe, but he said, "Good evening, Mrs. McCarran. Is all your family well?"

Gramma dropped the gentleman a curtsy, which Rafe thought an odd sort of antic. "Thank ye, Mr. Barnabas, Mary's blooming as ever and quite the lady with her silks and carriage. Now today she's off for Providence shopping, can ye fancy that?" A puzzled, worried look crossed Gramma's face. "But——"

"How's Andrew getting along? And Rosie? Do they like it in the country?"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" gasped Gramma. Her face changed. All the pretending went out of it, and she became like someone Rafe did not know. "May the Lord forgive me, forgetful old woman that I am!" She cast a wild look about her, like a person waking up in a strange place, and she began to run, a fluttery, panicky flight, but quick for so old a woman.

Rafe watched her in terrified disbelief. Then he screamed, "Gramma! Wait for me! Gramma!"

She did not hear him. She seemed to have forgotten that he existed. She darted past a coal wagon, turned sharply, and ran down Bedford Street, her skirts flying and the dinner pails bouncing in her hands. Rafe brushed his hand across his eyes to stop the tears, and he would have run after her but the gentleman stopped him. "Let her go, son. I'll see you safely home."

"But she's my *Gramma*!" cried Rafe, in terrible dismay. "We came together. We——"

"I know. But you're too small a boy to run after her in the crowded streets. Don't worry. I must go up to my office for a moment. Would

you like to come?" He held out his hand and Rafe took it, there being nothing else sensible to do. "It won't take long, and it will give the horses a rest. They've been all the way to New Bedford and back today."

The office was big and sombrely grand. The gentleman looked at papers on the desk, and Rafe walked around, noticing everything. He said, "My name's Rafe McCarran. What's your name, please?"

"Barnabas Olney."

"Oh. My mother's mill has a man named Mr. Olney, too."

"Yes. That's Lucian Olney, my——" But he didn't finish. Perhaps he wasn't really paying attention.

"My mother doesn't like him. She says if I ever speak to him, she'll whip me, and she says some day she'll get the mill from him, too, and she says——"

"I beg your pardon. Will you excuse me while I telephone?"

Fascinated, Rafe watched him use the telephone, listening to every word although the talk was unintelligible to him. "What were you talking into it, sir?" he asked when Barnabas hung up.

"I was ordering cotton, Rafe. Tell me, do you go to school?"

"Yes, sir. To the Sisters. But not in the summer."

"Of course not. Do you like it?"

"No, sir. I——" He was about to explain that he couldn't like it because there was something wrong with him, and the Sisters knew what it was and they wouldn't tell. They just acted out his wrongness. But he thought better of it in time. It was a very personal matter, the trouble between himself and the Sisters. "Why do you wear these funny clothes, sir?"

"I got used to them when I was a Quaker."

"What's a Quaker?"

"Come. I've finished here now." They went into the yard, and the coachman brought the carriage, and they got into it. "A Quaker is a person of a certain religion. As you are a Catholic, I was a Quaker."

"Oh, I see. You're a heretic. If I went to public school, I'd be a heretic, too. I could walk to public school, and I'd like that, but my mother says she'd rather see me dead, so I can't go."

"What do you learn in school?"

"Oh, about the saints and our Lord, and I can say the whole alphabet, and we have numbers——" A jumble of things about school tumbled out of Rafe, mixed up with things about Aunt Minerva and Aunt Silence and Gramma and his mother and Leona. The

gentleman listened gravely, saying so little one could not judge if he were enjoying himself or merely doing his duty in taking a small boy home. But Rafe had a wonderful time. Nothing so exhilarating had ever happened as Gramma running off and leaving him. (She must have gone by another road, or someone had picked her up, for they did not pass her.) He was glad it had happened thus, for he wanted no woman around now.

Suddenly his tongue stopped tripping in mid-sentence. He studied Mr. Olney with a long sideways glance. He considered the sad truth: this masculine companionship was temporary. Mr. Olney did not belong to him. He gulped down the lump in his throat lest he demean the occasion with tears.

Mr. Olney seemed as content with silence as he had been with talk. The carriage clattered along, raising the dust of North Main Street. Rafe looked up at the deep, fat, white clouds and at the sunlight glinting on the river, and he thought about the loneliness at home. His hand slipped into Mr. Olney's. Thus they rode the rest of the way, hand in hand, saying nothing.

Mr. Olney knew where Rafe lived without being told. He helped the boy from the carriage, and Rafe, loth to let him go, said, "If you'll come around back, sir, I'll show you my electricity."

An urgency in the boy's voice forbade the man to refuse. Rafe showed him all the grape cuttings, dead and stiff now. "It starts here and goes all the way down there, around the barn, then along that wall, and next year I'll have enough to finish it all the way to the mill."

Mr. Olney nodded. He pointed out a place where the wires had become untied. "Shouldn't we repair that? So the circuit won't be broken."

They fastened the wires together with a long piece of grass, co-operating with each other. "I expect there's a lot of broken places now," said Rafe. "I haven't had much time for it lately, with Gramma here so much. I do the most on it when Gramma's living in the tenement."

"Where's your generator?" asked Mr. Olney.

"My—uh—what, sir?"

"Generator. The machine that makes the current."

"What's inside the generator?"

"I'm not sure. Wheels and cylinders, perhaps. I should try to find out, shouldn't I?"

"Yes, sir. I think you should."

"If I succeed, I'll let you know. Meanwhile, perhaps if you connected these wires with a box, and then had other wires come out the other side, it might do. Temporarily, of course."

"Yes, sir, I think it would!" He laughed at himself ruefully. He'd been very childish. "You know, I thought if I watched I'd see the electricity some day, but I never did, not really. Would I see it with a generator?"

"I don't think so, Rafe. I believe it's only visible when it's made into light with an Edison lamp. This is a hard subject, isn't it?"

"But I like it best of anything in the world, don't you?"

"Not at present. But perhaps if I learn more about it, I shall be as interested as you. Thanks for showing me the circuit."

"You're welcome. You can come any time to see it, even if I'm in school you can come. But you won't forget to find out about the generator, will you?"

They were walking back to Mr. Olney's carriage. "I won't forget, but it may take some time. Meanwhile, will you promise me something? If you're ever in trouble come to me at the mill, or write to me. I want you to do this because we're friends."

Rafe flushed, embarrassed. He muttered, "Women ask you to promise things. People like pirates and Indians and the Kings of Old made pacts and sealed them with blood."

Mr. Olney smiled. "We have a pact about the generator. And it was wrong of me to ask you to promise. It's enough if you remember."

"I'll remember," whispered Rafe.

His mother drove up then, and Mr. Olney bowed to her. She looked pretty in her summery dress and lacy hat which allowed the sun to make fancy shadows on her face. "Can I give you a cup of tea, Mr. Olney?"

"Thank you, Miss McCarran, but I must get back to the mill. That's a fine boy you have."

"I hope he hasn't been bothering you."

"Bother? No—no, indeed. Good day, Madam." And he got into his carriage and drove away.

Rafe had to explain about Gramma running away and Mr. Olney bringing him home, but his mother only half listened. She had to untie all her bundles and take a new silky dress from its rustly tissue paper. Once she asked, "Did he give you anything?"

He shook his head, puzzled. "He brought me home."

"Oh, *that's* surely cheap enough," she said, holding the dress up against herself. But her eyes were shiny and bright, happy looking.

He went into the kitchen where Leona gave him milk and cookies, and while he was eating, his mother put on the new dress and came to show him how pretty it was, and she danced all around the kitchen, singing her favourite song:

"Oh, Jim O'Shea was cast away upon an Indian Isle,  
The natives there they liked his hair—  
They liked his Irish smile—oh——

You shall have rings on your fingers  
And bells on your toes,  
Elephants to ride upon,  
My little Irish rose!  
So come to your nabob  
And on next St. Patrick's Day,  
Be Mrs. Mumbo Jumbo  
Jijibhoy Jay O'Shea!"

He'd never seen his mother so happy. He wished she'd be that way all the time.

A week later Mr. Olney came and took him to a place where electricity was made. He saw the generators with his own eyes and heard their noises. A man went around with them explaining things, and when Rafe asked about the insides, he showed them drawings. The man knew so much that Rafe got the idea he was Mr. Thomas A. Edison himself, in person. When they'd seen everything, Mr. Olney took Rafe to a place where they ate ice-cream, and they talked about electricity and all they had seen, and Rafe decided he liked Mr. Olney the best of anybody.

For Christmas Mr. Olney gave him an electric train that ran from batteries. He wouldn't stop playing with it or talking about it until finally his mother said, "Oh, hush up about it! It's not so wonderful as all that!"

"It's the most wonderful thing in the whole world," he said solemnly. "And don't you ever say it isn't!"

She turned away, brushing over the station, a trestle, and two semaphores with her skirt and not even noticing. "Oh, have it your way then. But it's no favour he's doing you, just remember that. Him and his trains, and 'Good evening, Madam' he says to me, like I was dirt in the road. Well, play with your trains then. 'Tis no more than you're entitled to!"

That evening Aunt Minerva and Mr. Rubashevski came to visit,

and Mr. Rubashevski got down on the floor and played trains, too. They developed a method of switching the freight so the Limited could go through without stopping, and during the course of this he and Mr. Rubashevski somehow made a pact which two wrecks and an argument over the transformer solidified. Then he had pacts with everyone: with Gramma about her daughters; with Aunt Minerva about the Jewish boy with the new suit; with Aunt Silence about jails and cats making kittens inside themselves; with Mr. Olney about electricity; with Leona about being an unwed mother and her dead baby that made her sad. Pacts with everyone but his mother. Regretfully he realized that if he hadn't martyrdomed his mother she might have more heart for secret pacts. Somehow it must be his own fault. Or the fault of the something that was wrong with him.

4

When he was eight years old he fell in love. The little girl was named Patsy. If she had any charm, it lay in her fragile wistfulness, a certain waiflike quality that seemed to ask for mercy. Her mother worked in a mill; therefore Patsy had to stay with the Sisters or play outside in the bare school yard until her mother came for her. Despite the large number of women working in mills, surprisingly few children were in Patsy's predicament. Usually there was someone to go to when school was out: a grandmother, an aunt, a neighbour. And a child did not have to be very old to fend for itself a few hours each day. Patsy might have done it had she not been timid and delicate.

"That's why I can stay," she explained to Rafe. "The Sisters let me because I'm delicate."

Since Rafe did not know what this meant, he could not question her right to be proud of it.

They achieved this degree of confidence and conversation, however, only after a long ordeal by silence, during which, throughout whole afternoons, they would eye each other warily from opposite sides of the yard. They could envisage no disgrace more dire than the one that would overtake them if anyone discovered that secretly, wordlessly, they liked each other. During school hours they did not exist for each other, but when they were alone in the yard, waiting, he devised ways to show off before her: he played marbles with himself, cavorted on the steps, turned somersaults, climbed anything climbable, and even got up on the high iron fence and walked along it. All this she seemed

not to notice, immured as she was in lonely, pinch-faced meditation on her own side of the yard. Finally, as he attempted to hop along the fence on one foot, he fell, skinning his legs and hands on the gravel.

She ran to him. "You've hurt yourself awful."

He could not cry before her. He brushed himself off, glowering at her.

"You're brave," she whispered.

He smiled, knowing this to be true. "You're not so bad. For a girl."

For several days they made no further progress. Then he saved a cookie from his lunch and gave it to her after school. Although they exchanged no words over the gift, it marked a great advancement over their previous condition. The halting progress continued, while each ate his heart out for love of the other. She became beautiful in his eyes, and he put himself to sleep thinking of her.

Even at the height of their aching love, their conversation was not copious. He might say, one day, "I have a bird's nest. Home. An oriole's." She had nothing at home. She breathed softly. "That's wonderful!" And he promised nonchalantly, "If I find another one I'll give it to you." That would be enough to tide them over a day or two of silence.

Or she might proudly bring him some fragment of her desolate life. Shyly: "We had meat pies for supper last night." Because he had never tasted meat pies, this seemed remarkable to him. "Gee willikers, we only had an old chicken." When a longing, hungry look crossed her face, he misinterpreted it as love, for he did not know she'd never tasted chicken.

They had to dredge deeply into their lives to find conversation. He found Aunt Silence on one occasion. "She's famous!" It was a new word to her. "Famous?" she faltered. "Uh-huh. She fights for the Cause." "Oh!" she breathed, in worshipful unenlightenment.

Kitty bought an Electric that year, and it was the pride of her life. When she called for Rafe she usually saw the little girl in the corner of the yard, huddled in her outgrown ragged coat, her wan face blotched with red where the cold had pinched it. Then one March day she drove up in the silent Electric and caught them talking together. She said to Rafe, "Who's that little girl?"

He mumbled, "Just a girl."

"What's her name?"

"Patsy."



"Sure I'll bet she's a special friend of yours."

"She's a *girl*!" His heart ached as he denied his love. "Nobody's friends with *girls*!"

Kitty said, "It's well she's not your friend, a common little thing like her."

"What's common?" She missed the defensive edge in his voice.

"Ragged little poor children are common. Mill workers' children. Nasty, dirty little children. It's a pity you have to go to school with them, and you wouldn't for a minute, saving the salvation of your soul. But maybe after your first communion——"

"Why aren't I common?"

"Because you're rich, dear. Not rich like Mr. Olney, but sure there're not many little boys whose mothers have Electrics, now are there? You just remember if anybody's mean to you, your mother can buy you anything you want, so you don't ever need to be unhappy."

He turned away from her, looking out the car window at the dreary landscape, grey and brown and dirty, the life wrung out of it by the lingering soggy grip of winter. Wisps of fog rose from the river like dingy veils, and over all the town the mill chimneys rolled grey banners of smoke. For no reason, he felt like crying. Something hurt inside him, where there was a vague, nameless trouble. Looking out the window at the rising fog, he discovered that he was always a little unhappy. There were layers and layers of feelings inside him, and underneath them all, at the very bottom, lay an unassuaged ache. At that moment he glimpsed it, pristine, for he could think of nothing in the world he wanted his mother to buy him.

Not long after that he hurt Patsy mortally. She sidled up to him and said proudly, "Tomorrow I'm gonna have new shoes. My mother said. Tomorrow's pay day, and Mr. Rubashevski's got my shoes with only a quarter owing, and tomorrow I'm gonna have 'em. My mother said so."

"Mr. Rubashevski's my uncle cause he married my Aunt Minerva."

"Oh! Your *uncle*? I bet you—you——" She stopped, snared by the futility of trying to express her awe of one actually related to Rubashevski's emporium.

"That's nothing. My mother won't even buy anything there cause it's nothing but old junk. Mr. Rubashevski's a regular guy, though, even if——"

Her pale mouth trembled. Her shoulders sagged, as if her fragile body were defenceless against the despair of her spirit. Sorrow

quivered over her vulnerable face. She turned away from him, lest he see that he had made her cry.

He pranced along the fence to show off before her, who could not bear to look at him through her mist of tears. What folly had betrayed her into thinking he could understand? He, of all boys? He, the rich one!

Perhaps her grief made her talk at home. When next they were alone together she came up to him primly and announced, "I can't talk to you any more."

"Why not? I got a sparrow's nest at home. I won't give it to you if you get mean."

She thought with longing of the nest, a thing to have, possession. She pushed away temptation, looking down at her new shoes. Her voice became crisp with righteousness. "You're a bastard. That's why."

He looked at her in wonder. "What's that? What's a bastard?"

She tossed her head proudly. "I won't tell." She started to walk away from him, her shabby back rigid with hauteur.

He called after her, "You're silly! How can I be what I don't even know what it is?"

"It's something that's not nice, that's what. It's just the nastiest thing in the world, that's what, and nobody'll ever talk to you, so there!"

Bewildered, hurt, he cried out, "But I'm just me! I'm the same I always was! Patsy! Patsy—I'm just me!" It was the first time he'd ever called her by her name, and neither of them noticed it. It was his one endearment, wrenched from him, bearing the sum of his love. To her it was merely her name cried in a rejected voice—a thing so commonplace she could afford to turn her back upon it.

That night Rafe asked his mother what a bastard was. His question was quiet, apparently unconcerned and impersonal. She turned on him, her face viperish, her voice shrill with fury. "Where'd you learn that nasty word? Answer me! That's a vile foul word—where'd you learn it?"

He was too astounded by her unreasonable anger to answer. His pain and bewilderment were great; now he also felt fear, the blind fear of the weak when the strong go mad. He had wanted to cry all afternoon because he grieved and because he was guilty of something, perhaps of some terrible sin, which he did not understand. Now, when he felt terror of his mother's irresponsibility, never before seen or suspected, he wept without control.

"Answer me! Don't stand there like a ninny crying—answer me! Where'd you learn that filthy word?" She clutched his shoulders and shook him, making the tears fly away from his eyes.

He twisted from her grasp and ran from the kitchen, where they had been eating, into the dining-room, she after him. He bumped into a chair, stumbled, fell. He crashed into the china cupboard, breaking the glass and many of the dishes. She seized him and slapped his battered face. "You wicked, wicked boy! You've broken my best dishes! You wicked boy, that never should have been born! You wicked——"

He sank upon the floor at her feet, limp, huddled. "I'm just me," he sobbed weakly. "Just the same I always was. Patsy—Patsy——"

Contrition swept over Kitty. He lay so still that she thought she'd killed him. She crossed herself in terror. She knelt beside him, lifting his head into her arms. He breathed heavily. His nose was bleeding, and some of the cuts on his face were deep and ugly. She rocked him in her arms, spoiling her dress with his blood. "Rafe, Rafe, my own baby! You're everything I have in the world, and may God strike me, I've never done anything but for you!" Her voice was low, crooning over him. She tightened her arms around him in a paroxysm of love, and he moaned.

"Leona!" she screamed. "Go get Miss Bess! Go this minute, I think he's dying!"

Leona did as she was told. It had not occurred to her to interfere on Rafe's behalf, for in her view violence had to work itself out. It came and went, a part of life. She came of a world where men beat their wives, women their children. And she had to admit that had her own baby lived, the day would have come when she'd have lit into him; and when it was over she'd have wept and moaned as Kitty was doing.

The doctor came and pulled slivers of glass out of Rafe. Everyone made a fuss over him while he got well. He was left with three small scars on his face and a long, jagged scar on his arm. He was intensely ashamed of these marks of his disgrace. He was afraid that some day someone would ask him what they came from, and he could never answer, unless he lied. He could never say to anyone, "They're from being a bastard. Everybody that's a bastard has to have 'em forever and ever."

He refused to go back to that school, and Kitty enrolled him in another on the South Side near St. Anne's. He refrained from making friends there lest he again suffer betrayal. But before summer came,

and release, the children discovered his secret—how, he never knew. It was as if the spring wind carried the word of his disgrace. One morning everyone knew it, and they screamed the hated word at him: "Bastard! Bastard! Dirty little bastard!" They amplified it with other words he'd never heard. A boy came up to him and said, "Your mother's a whore!" Rafe didn't know what that meant, but he hit the boy. The Mother Superior punished him for fighting.

After that he had to fight almost every day, and he got a bad reputation with the Sisters. He developed a paralyzing fear of them. He lived in dread anticipation of punishment, of humiliation, of being forced to fight. He did not know which he hated most: the Sisters, the other children, or the hopeless agony of battle in which he never tasted victory. He stopped asking questions in his classes, lest they call attention to himself. He stopped learning his lessons. He even stopped wanting to live.

And he could talk to no one about it because if he did they'd find out he was a bastard. Aunt Silence, Gramma, Aunt Minerva, Mr. Olney, even his mother—they'd all find out, then there'd be no one left on earth to love him any more.

Finally, in despair over his incorrigibility, the Sisters sent him to the priest, who whipped him first and then lectured him. "God hates the sight of wicked children. You should realize you're a child of sin, and God can never forgive children of sin. You should try to please the Sisters, and thank God for their forbearance and sainted goodness because they've taken one so defiled as you into the fold of their everlasting love. You must be patient, my boy, and bear your cross with fortitude, because God——"

Rafe could endure no more of it. He jumped to his feet, looking straight into the priest's eyes. "I hate God!" he screamed. "I hate Him forever and ever! Do you hear? I *hate* God!"

The priest, stunned by the magnitude of the blasphemy, was momentarily too shocked to move. Rafe darted through the door and ran down the street, ran and ran in terror until his lungs were bursting with the pain of running. The priest was corpulent and the day was warm. He did not pursue the child. No need. He'd be back for his punishment in due time. The Church never lost her own.

Rafe ran north on Main Street. Then he walked, slower and slower. He was miles from home and not quite certain of the way. He came to Mr. Rubashevski's store, right there across the street. He eyed it longingly while his feet dragged him slowly past it. He blinked and swallowed, so that he wouldn't cry in the street. More than anything,

he wanted to go in there where he had friends, and he couldn't, lest they found out and be his friends no longer.

Anton Rubashevski, standing in the shadows of his doorway, saw the boy. He darted across the street, caught up with him, and brought him back. The man and boy exchanged no greeting, but as they worked their way through the traffic the boy's damp hand clung to the man's in desperation.

The minute she saw him, Aunt Minerva said, "Rafe, you're in trouble."

"Trouble. Yes, trouble." A light broke over his face. "That's what I should do—go to Mr. Olney."

"Come in back and have some lemonade. Anton, why don't you duck out and get us some ice-cream?"

In the back room Aunt Minerva began chipping ice and squeezing lemons while Rafe nibbled on the cookies she set out. Aunt Minerva didn't really look at him. She asked things with her head turned away, as if she knew he didn't want to be looked at. "They beat you at that damned Papist school?"

"Aunt Minerva, where's Mr. Olney's mill? So I can go there?"

"What makes you think he can help?"

"Well you see, I *promised*. He said when I'm in trouble I should go to him, and I promised." Rafe wrinkled his forehead over his sad eyes. "Course it was a long time ago, when I was only little. So maybe he's forgotten all about it."

"I don't imagine he has," said Aunt Minerva. She set the clinking pitcher of lemonade on the table, poured a glass for him, and sat down beside him in such a way that he wouldn't have to look into her face if he didn't want to. "The kids have found out, haven't they?"

He gulped his lemonade. "They call me—names. And I fight 'em. Then——" He could not go on. He bowed his head on the table and sobbed. Aunt Minerva let him cry. She neither touched him nor said a word until he'd wept himself dry. Then she got the ice-cream from where Mr. Rubashevski had put it next to the ice, and she served it, and they all three ate, almost happily, until the store door tinkled and Mr. Rubashevski had to go to wait on the customer.

Then Aunt Minerva said, "Rafe, we have to face this thing, get it straight once and for all. The kids called you a bastard, didn't they?"

He shrank from her, from the word, shrank from the coming blow.

"You know what that means?"

"It's a sin I did, some awful, terrible sin I did, some——"

"Oh, be reasonable. You're nine years old. You haven't had time enough to do some awful sin, and in your heart you know it."

But he clung to the notion that he was guilty. "I hate God. I told the priest so after he whipped me, and that's an awful sin."

In her dry voice, Minerva said, "I should think God will survive it. Now this being a bastard—it's not a thing you have to shout from the housetops, but on the other hand you must understand it yourself so you can cope with it. I'm not trying to fool you, Rafe. It's not good, but there are more unfortunate things. Be worse to be born blind, maybe. Or with a rancid disposition, like some I could name."

In a hesitant murmur he brought out the question he'd vowed never to ask again. "What is it, Aunt Minerva?"

She hated every moment of this. The thing was awful, just plain awful, and she felt helpless to deal with it. "A bastard is a child whose mother and father were not married."

His brow wrinkled in its characteristic expression of bewildered thought. Living as he always had, isolated from normality, he didn't even know what marriage was, except that Leah and Philip Hawkes had done it and it was connected with ice-cream and cake, and his mother hadn't let him go. "I don't understand," he said finally.

Minerva sighed. "Frankly, I don't understand myself, if I stop and think about it long enough. Perhaps Anton—you trust him, don't you? You know he wouldn't lie to you?"

Rafe nodded. Minerva went into the store to get Anton. He protested, "But Minerva, it is not my place to—— Such interference! His mother should——"

"But she won't. It's a man's job, Anton, and I can't do it. It embarrasses me to death. If he asks a question, I——"

"Yes. But Kitty will not like this. If he turns against her?"

"Devil and the deep sea. He's breaking his heart now because he's turned against himself. And if one has to choose the soul he saves, better his that's full of promise than hers that's withered on the vine."

"Oh Minerva! Do not make me do this. Please!"

"Anton, have you forgotten how, when you were a kid, you had to learn to be a Jew? Well, he must learn to be a bastard. And it's harder for him. You had thousands of kids learning with you. He's all alone."

"It would not be so bad if I did not have to make his mother sound good." And he walked slowly to the back room, reluctant as one walking the last mile.

Rafe never went back to that school either. He spent another long serene summer at the farm, marked by the secret loss of faith in things that once had been all reality. He perceived that his electric circuit was childish, that Gramma's daughters were truly not at the mill, and that the Kings of Old had done some pretty silly things. Mr. Barnabas Olney came to see him several times, and took him for rides in a real automobile, new and big, not just a pokey Electric like his mother's. He felt sorry for Mr. Olney because he had overheard Mrs. Riggs telling his mother that Mr. Olney's wife had not spoken to him for years and years. They had a big house full of servants, and you could hear a pin drop from one end of it to the other, for she wouldn't so much as say "Please pass the cream." People just came to see her, not him, or anyway not often. Of all the people in Rafe's insecure world, Mr. Olney was the one who knew exactly the necessary thing to say or do, and at the necessary time. Like when they'd gone to where the electricity was made, and the train at Christmas, and even little things like when to stop for food or ice-cream. Sometimes he would almost burst with longing, in his own loneliness, to make amends to Mr. Olney for the meanness of his wife.

He and Mr. Olney had business affairs that summer because in the fall Mr. Olney was going to send Rafe away to boarding-school. He came one night and settled it with Kitty. He got books about all the schools, and he and Rafe read them and looked at the pictures, and Rafe picked out the one he wanted to go to. He was elated when he discovered there were schools without priests or sisters. Having thus narrowed the field, he made his choice on the basis of how the buildings looked and what the writing promised: swimming, horseback riding, boating. Kitty said he would grow up a heretic, but Mr. Olney took Rafe's side and they won.

He knew his mother was glad he was going away, and he was glad, too. She talked a lot about how she'd miss him, and she cried some, but she was really happy because Mr. Olney was finally doing something for Rafe. It cost a lot of money to go to school, she said, and in Ireland everybody that did it was a gentleman, so now he'd be a gentleman, too. Anything that cost a lot of money made his mother happy.

He had some trouble adjusting himself to life in the school, but after he had spent the Christmas holidays at home he returned there with a deeper insight into what it meant to him. He made friends, and slowly, as the years passed, he began to overcome some of his hidden fears. He came to feel almost free. Not quite free, of course. That would

always be impossible for one who carried a secret that he must always keep, even in the heart of the deepest friendship. But he excelled in his studies; he was passably good at games; he had all the money he needed; and when he asked a question, the masters tried to answer him sensibly. Nobody fought with him unduly, shunned him particularly, or reminded him constantly of his sins. Here he was just like everyone else; and for him, during those years, that was the sum of happiness.



## PART SIX

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### Hard Times

By February the winter of 1912 had settled into stagnant bleakness. Dirty snow lay in patches on the frozen ground. Ice formed every night in the ruts of the roads. Cotton fluff, fragments of rags and paper, wrappers from tobacco plugs and cigarettes, the remnants of old posters advertising liver pills, cold remedies, and last summer's circus accumulated in the lee of buildings, gathering grime, and from there blew out over the city, careening drunkenly on the sharp edges of the winds. The bare trees rattled their majestic skeletons. From dusk to dawn the foghorns groaned lonely warnings, and when a boat whistle cried at night the sound went through you, scratching on your nerves. Houses that in summer had looked handsome with their screened verandas, green sweeping lawns, and the sheltering foliage of great elms and maples, now showed their sagging shutters and need of paint. They climbed the hills and valleys of the town like a dingy army, their good practical colours blending in chromatic winter sadness: leaden grey, mustard, dark brown, dirty red. The wind swept over the deserted porches, sometimes setting an abandoned rocking chair into creaking motion. The leaves of the rhododendrons curled, and lean dogs shivered as they nosed at trash barrels.

Nobody went out if he could think of an excuse to stay in. The Portuguese matrons in black dresses and shawls scurried through the streets like gnomes, going to and from Mass or fetching beer from the saloons. On Third Street the prostitutes shivered, their pinched faces wan under the paint, their finery sodden. Men lingered in the saloons, nursing their five-cent beers, dreading the moment when the glasses would be empty and they'd have to go home where it was cold—where, if you admitted the truth, it had been cold for months on end.

On such a night as this, Andrew Hawkes slowly opened the door of his tenement and stepped reluctantly into the kitchen. The heat in the room was thick, for Rosie had built up the fire in the iron range to cook supper. The oppressive air steamed, smelling of drying

diapers, scorched oatmeal, and rancid fat. All during the winter Rosie and the children lived in the kitchen, never airing it, and keeping the other rooms shut off. It was better to be overheated in one room than half-frozen in four. Rosie sat as close to the stove as she could get. She wore a thin cotton dress and a ragged sweater. She was nursing her youngest child, the last of seven Rosie had borne. Only three of the seven had survived: the eldest, Kathy, now ten years old and ready to go to work in the mill if Rosie could find a way to get around Andrew's obstinacy and the child labour laws; a boy of four who by some quirk of destiny had never been sick a day of his life; and the baby, a girl three months old who had been born with a club foot.

Not a trace of prettiness still clung to Rosie. Andrew, who was six years older than his wife, now looked ten years younger. It was unfortunately true that Andrew no longer loved Rosie. The best he could do now was to feel sorry for her. They quarrelled almost constantly, Rosie with steady, acrimonious nagging, Andrew with spurts of temper that alternated with fits of silence. Rosie was the person Andrew had to contend with. Andrew was the person Rosie had to get the best of. Her greatest joy was to steal small change from his pockets. His goading need was to escape from her to the Union Hall or Aunt Minerva's where he could have an hour of blessed peace.

"You're late," said Rosie, in the tone of whining martyrdom that had become her everyday voice. "I tried to keep the porridge hot, but it burned."

Andrew took off his overcoat and hung it on a nail. It was the same garment Aunt Minerva and Gramma had given him for Christmas eleven years before. "The mill's down," he said dully. "I had to wait to get paid off." He sat down wearily at the kitchen table, avoiding Rosie's eyes. His shoulders sagged, and from the back he looked like an old man.

Kathy went to the sink where she washed a bowl, filled it with oatmeal, and put it on the table before her father with a pitcher of milk that was beginning to sour.

"Any sugar?" asked Andrew.

The girl shook her head. "Molasses is all." Andrew poured molasses and milk on the oatmeal and began to eat. He longed for a cup of tea. It would be worth walking the seven miles into town just to get a cup of tea from the Rubashevskis. Even on a night like this.

"I said, the mill's down."

"I heard you. What you want me to do about it, go out and kill myself?"

Andrew turned to Kathy. "Where's Gramma?"

"I dunno, Papa. She didn't come back from the mill this noon." Kathy should have been in school that day, but her only shoes had fallen apart a week before. She shuffled about the kitchen in Gramma's old felt slippers, tied on to her feet with grocery string.

Rosie said, "She's gone to that woman's again."

"Where's Daniel?" asked Andrew. Daniel was his four-year-old son.

"Downstairs playing," said Kathy. "Want me to fetch him?"

Andrew smiled at her. "Might be a good idea. You could play a bit yourself, if they don't mind. But don't take anything to eat, even if Mrs. Brazita asks you to. It's going to be just as hard for them as it is for us, with the mill down."

"But, Papa, if she's going to throw it out, like she always says——"

He looked at his daughter's sharp, hungry face, and he sighed. "She isn't going to throw it out, Kathy. To say that is just her way of being polite."

Rosie began to laugh. The sound had a cutting edge. "Politel Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, you slay me, Andrew! She's polite like a pig, the dirty Portuguese sow!" Rosie held the baby high in her arms and began to rock it, saying in a mincing voice, "Oh please step in, Mrs. Brazita, and just help yourself to the cakes there on the table. A dozen eggs and the best butter, Mrs. Brazita, but I'm going to throw them out anyhow, so you might as well——" She broke off in high hysterical laughter. The baby began to cry. Kathy, who had got her coat from its nail and started to put it on, hesitated uncertainly at the back door.

"Stop it, Rosie! You've no right to make the kid dislike the only friends she has. Run along, Kathy. Your mother doesn't mean it. She really likes Mrs. Brazita."

"I guess she's kinda tired tonight," said Kathy patiently. Like most mill-workers' children, she was wise beyond her years.

When the door closed behind Kathy, Andrew took his pay envelope from his pocket, opened it, and spread the money out on the table. Four dollars and eighty cents. There had been two pay cuts in the last six months. What he now contemplated was four days' wages.

"Well, there it is, Rosie. The working capital of Andrew Hawkes. Maybe I should invest it in a pushcart and go out scavenging, the way Aunt Minerva did in the old days."

"You can throw it down the sink for all I care."

"Listen, Rosie. We've got to talk. We can't go on like this,

working our hearts out and still half-starved all the time. Maybe if I——”

“You should of thought of that before you got up to your neck in that dirty union. Cost you your foreman’s job, the way you acted in the Long Strike, and now I expect you can go begging. Isn’t any mill in town would put you on now, even if you’d work for nothing, the way they know you’d start organizing soon as you got in the place. I must of been out of my mind the day I married you.”

“Well, you can leave any time you want. All you have to do is just walk out. Any time.”

A crafty look crossed Rosie’s face. “Oh, no you don’t, Andrew Hawkes. You don’t get rid of me like I was an old shoe. You took me for better or worse, and you don’t get rid of me now like I was some dirty Protestant or fancy woman. If you think for one minute——”

He shrugged. They’d been through all this before, many, many times. “Suit yourself. But you won’t starve any quicker by yourself than you will here with me.”

“I got the good of my soul to look out for,” she said virtuously.

“When it tells you how we’re going to eat, let me know.”

“I won’t demean myself to argue with a blasphemer. You’ve nobody but yourself to blame, Andrew. If you hadn’t been so high and mighty in the rotten unions during the Long Strike, you’d be a foreman today, and besides——”

“I’d still be laid off. Mill’s just as down for foremen as for everybody else. What’s the truth of the matter, I never should have let you talk me into leaving Mr. Barnabas Olney—but like as not if times don’t get better he’ll be down too before long.”

“Well, you made your bed, Andrew Hawkes, and now you can lie in it. And you needn’t come whining to me for sympathy, because you won’t get it.”

“I wish you’d get it through your head we’re in this together. If you were willing to talk sense for a few minutes and quit blaming everything on me, maybe we could figure out a way to——”

“If the kids and me starve, it’s on your soul, Andrew Hawkes, and don’t you forget it when you’re burning in hell. Four babies already you’ve killed, with your dirty strikes and throwing all your chances away——”

Slowly he picked up his money and put it in his pocket, not looking at her. “Don’t you ever say that again, Rosie. Don’t you ever.”

“I’ll say what I please, you—you *murderer*!”

Wearily he walked across the room, took his overcoat, and put it on. "I'm going out to look for Gramma."

As the door shut behind him, she screamed, "Go to your fancy woman—go on! Maybe she'll let you off the rent if you love her up good and proper!"

He seethed with hatred of Rosie. A moment longer, and he would have struck her—and added one more bitter act to the sum of bitter acts with which he reproached himself. He walked slowly to Kitty's house, trying to get his temper under control. Kitty's mastiff ran toward him, growling. Andrew called the dog by name and the mastiff ended by leaping up and licking his face, and then, with Andrew's assistance, sneaking into the house.

Gramma, Kitty, and Miss Bess were drinking tea before the open fire in the kitchen. Kitty poured a cup for Andrew, who took it gratefully. "I'm glad she's here," he said. "At least she'll eat. Unless she decides to come home when she finds out the mill's down."

"We've already told her," said Kitty. "She's going to start a bit of crocheting, since she'll have so much time on her hands."

Gramma sat in the Boston rocker, creaking back and forth, blowing on her tea, oblivious to what they said about her. She was warm, replete with good food, cosy with contentment. Watching her, Andrew wished that he too were half mad so that he could snuggle down somewhere and keep warm and never have to think about anything again. "Where's Leona?" he asked.

"In town. 'Tis her day off."

"She'd better watch her step," said Miss Bess. "I don't mind rescuing 'em once, but if it gets to be a habit— Andrew, how're you going to make out with the mill down?"

"I don't know. I'll start making the rounds tomorrow, and if my shoes hold out—"

"Spare yourself the trouble. According to tonight's paper there're twenty-two mills down, and business getting worse every day."

"Sounds like it's going to be another '93." His tone was dull, almost disinterested, as if starvation were facing some other man and he thought it vaguely too bad.

"Worse, maybe. In '93 we didn't have the South to contend with."

He repeated the cliché of the textile worker, whether mill-owner or doffer boy: "Sooner or later, people have to have cloth."

Silence's birdlike eyes studied him with penetrating shrewdness. A comfortable stillness fell over the mellow old kitchen, broken only by the crackling of the fire and Gramma's tuneless humming. Kitty moved,

her chair creaking and her dress rustling, "It's a hard thing for me, with no rent coming in."

"If you're trying to get a rise out of me, Kitty, you can lay off. Food for my kids is a damned sight more important than your rent."

Kitty flushed. "'Twasn't your rent on my mind, Andrew, but the mill. Now it's down, that Mr. Philpott'll be around again, trying to wiggle out of it. Them and their schemes!"

Sardonic amusement flickered in Silence's knowing eyes. "Don't lose sleep over it, Kitty. Andrew, how often do you have to go through this before you wake up? Wage cuts, strikes, mills down—be all right if you were a fool, but you're not. When you got so active in the union during the Long Strike, I thought perhaps——"

"Miss Bess, I have a wife and kids. That means work. And in this town work means mills, whether you're rich or poor. Just mills. Though I was half thinking I might go round to the glove factory tomorrow."

"Save yourself, Andrew. They're finished."

"No! You mean the glove factory's broke?" He felt a sense of loss. He'd never known anyone lucky enough to work there. With over a hundred mills and only one glove factory in town, perhaps it wasn't very important. It had been a comfort all the same: a place of refuge, something unique which might escape a general disaster.

"Ezra Pugh's been after it for years. Now he's got them. Something about a bank loan—I suppose they needed money in a hurry and were fools enough to go to him. It's not in the papers yet, but there are a lot of rumours. I'm surprised they lasted this long with everyone against them but Barnabas Olney. And he has precious little influence any more."

Because of his union work, Andrew knew a great deal about the economics of the textile business. The goal of all textile makers was a one-industry town in which the number of workers always exceeded the number of jobs; where lower wages were the answer to every industrial problem; where the workers' choice was never between this job and that job, but between this job and no job. So long as textiles had been made it had been the makers' goal in every age and every country. Sooner or later this system of take all and give nothing broke down, wherever it had been tried. The mills of Old England gave ground before the mills of New England. Now the mills of New England were giving ground before the mills of the South. The mills followed poverty, seeking always the most work for the least pay,

the dreary one-industry town, child labour, female labour. They walked the treadmill of boom and depression, with each successive boom weaker than the last, each depression a little stronger, until finally the whole thing collapsed, leaving the debris of a shattered town, its one industry gone forever.

"It's a rotten business," he said softly.

"Don't you think it's time you got out of it?"

"Miss Bess, I have three kids."

"Are they eating now? I think you have brains, Andrew. (My, that's a vulgar expression!) I heard some of your speeches during the strike, and they were good. They influenced the men. And Philip told me you used to work on inventions with him. Said you and he had patents on a new shuttle. Now——"

Andrew shrugged. "Philip's company shelved it. After all, they rent out most of the machinery. What's the use of making something better when the old stuff keeps going and everybody's happy with the profits?"

"Don't be bitter, Andrew. I merely mentioned it to support my contention that you have some modicum of mind. What do you think of women's suffrage?"

"I beg your pardon?" The change of topic was so sudden that Andrew wondered if he'd fallen asleep for a second, missing the link.

"You heard me. Are you for it, or against it?"

"Why, I never thought about it. Seems if a woman has enough sense to run a machine she might have enough sense to vote, but——"

"You're for it. Fine. Now——"

"But Miss Bess, I didn't say——"

"Hush, Andrew. You're obviously for it. Now I've been looking for a presentable man. . . ." She cast a somewhat caustic glance over Andrew's shabby exterior. "Well, one that can be made presentable, anyhow—who believes in suffrage and can make speeches that influence people. You'll do. Can you start tomorrow?"

Andrew supposed that Miss Bess, out of kindness, was hiring him as a handy-man. "Miss Bess, I don't feel justified in letting you make a job for me when any boy could chop your wood and shovel your walk. You don't need a man to——"

"Good heavens, Andrew, it's not for me, it's for suffrage. Now mind, I don't promise anything. Can't when it comes to elections. But——"

"Elections?"

"But win or lose, you can't be worse off than you are now." She

pursed her lips thoughtfully, her bright eyes staring into space. "Yes. If you can get out the union vote, and I can persuade the women to work on their husbands, I really think we might have a chance to win. That's one thing about hard times. Nobody can fire a man for staying off to vote when he isn't working anyhow. And once we win——"

"Win *what?*"

"Don't be a fool, Andrew. I've decided to run you for the State Legislature."

2

Lucian was worried. The Midas touch which should have passed on to him with the genes of the Olneys eluded him. Naturally any man was entitled to a few errors in judgment. One expected to drop a little now and then in the market, to run into occasional hard times, bad luck. But it was almost uncanny that Lucian lost always.

What was disgraceful, in his view, was not the loss, but worrying about it. Correctly, the sort of man he fancied himself to be should be careless about money. He should lose with grace, without insomnia or loss of appetite. The last coin should fall with the same insouciance as the first. When one was wiped out, one should shrug, toss one's cloak about one with a Byronesque gesture, scarlet lining flashing, and go off to Greece to fight for freedom. The grand gesture. No looking back.

He'd begun to worry during the Long Strike when he'd lost all the mill's liquid assets in the cotton market and had had to trade a tenement for the ground and water rents. Now it had become an insidious habit. He'd always had contempt for conscience, the boggy that caused people to rue the past. It did not occur to him that worry was conscience upside down: regret over the future.

In 1912 he faced bankruptcy. His mill had not paid dividends for three years. In a town where twenty-five per cent annually was considered the stockholders' right, that was enough disgrace; but it did not bother Lucian so much as his market losses. There was something so prosaic about dividends, so bourgeois, grubby. They lacked the flash of adventure to which he felt entitled.

He looked at Adelaide. He still had her, though he'd lost all her money. She sat in a fumed oak rocker beside the fireplace where the grate held the smouldering remains of a coal fire. She had grown fat, almost obese, and she was always cold. The electric lamp behind her on an oak table had a spreading shade of stained glass. It cast a



variegated light over her limp hair and sallow skin. She was embroidering a table scarf on dark linen in silk of many colours. She bent over the work, squinting at it in the unkind light. From across the room where he lay on the Mission oak couch, Lucian could see the pouches under her eyes and how the flesh of her fingers bulged out around her rings.

He said lazily, "Why don't we just chuck it, I wonder. Skip."

She looked at him blankly. He did not often try to make conversation with her. When he did she yearned terribly to be bright. "Skip, dear?"

"Um. To the Riviera. Lie around in the sun, meet some clever people. I'm fed up with these dolts around here. Wouldn't you like to meet a few dukes and crowned heads?" He had a grotesque picture of Adelaide dancing with a crowned, but bodyless head. It amused him, and he laughed.

He was rarely in a good humour, therefore she laughed, too. Then she pouted, remembering that such flighty talk was not really *nice*. "But Lucian, with the mill down, do you think we——"

He upended a china dog on the table beside him, scratched a match on it, and relit his cigar. "I'm thinking of selling out."

"But Papa says conditions are just *terrible*." Her mouth quivered in worry. "Lucian, dear, if you sold out what would you *do*?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, Lucian! You *can't* be *serious*. You know you can't do *nothing*, dear."

"Why? In civilized countries civilized people always do nothing. And I'm civilized, even if my country isn't. We'll just shove off, and——"

"You mean leave Papa and Mama?"

"Why not?"

She burst into tears. Between sobs she blubbered that it wasn't *decent* to do nothing, and they hadn't the money, and what would Papa and Mama think, and everyone else, and she couldn't hold up her head when people asked what he did if he was just nothing but a—*a* loafer. She maundered on, artlessly revealing the whole creed on which she had been nourished, the worship of work, of business for the sake of business. He went out, leaving her crying.

Since he did not mention the idea again, Adelaide decided he had been joking. He had not been. He found, however, that when there is no life in the textile business, nobody wants to buy a mill. He sounded out half a dozen prospects, and then, in desperation, was about

to approach his father when Bailey Philpott told him that Kitty McCarran's lawyer had written demanding the rent, which was eighteen months in arrears.

"Who's her lawyer? Fix it with him."

"It's some Jew from Boston." Mr. Philpott's tone dripped disapproval. "I never heard of him. One of those shysters. Writes in a rather nasty tone. He gives you two weeks before he starts foreclosure proceedings."

"Well, buy him off. Fix it. That's what I hire you for."

"If you'll notice," said Mr. Philpott bleakly, "he's sent a copy to the chairman of the board, Mr. Pugh."

"Oh, my God!"

Lucian went to his bank. The banker, who was a cousin, was courteous. But—"You're into us pretty heavily, Lucian. And we're holding quite a lot of your paper as security on other loans. Of course, if you have an order and want this for cotton——"

"It's not exactly that, Simon. Well, it's a little embarrassing—but—the truth is, I'm being dunned."

"Dunned?"

Lucian explained with charm and flashes of humour, about the ground and water rent. Since Cousin Simon also handled Barnabas's trust for Kitty, he knew a good deal more than Lucian thought he knew.

"I see. Seems a rather trifling sum to embarrass you, Lucian. Suppose you let us take an audit of your books? Then if it's at all possible we'd be glad to lend you what you need."

Lucian consented, certain that all was well. He honestly had no conception of the condition of his company. Having begun the mill on a shoestring and issued stock in it to pay for everything, and having subsequently sunk all Adelaide's money in it, then all his own, then all he could raise by selling his tenement property and mortgaging his house, he had a notion the mill must be worth the total of these amounts, say about a million dollars cash.

Cousin Simon thought otherwise. After taking his audit he not only refused Lucian's loan; he also quietly began to liquidate the bank's holdings of Lucian's stock, and—not so quietly—to call in the loans he had made on it.

Lucian had not considered it necessary to tell his father-in-law about his call upon Cousin Simon. Mr. Pugh, like Lucian, pooh-poohed the notion that Mr. Philpott might fail to handle the McCarran woman and her lawyer. Therefore he suffered a bad day when at eleven one morning Mr. Philpott informed him that Olney's fancy woman was

adamant and her lawyer incorruptible; at one Mr. Pugh had lunch with Lucian to discuss manipulating the stock again to squeeze the rent from it; at three, on that same ill-omened day, he discovered that the stock had yielded its last manipulation. The bottom had dropped out of it, thanks to Cousin Simon.

When Ezra had had time to put two and two together, he understood the situation clearly: the whole thing was Barnabas's doing, his shrewd way of getting control of the mill. "She's his—harumph—woman, isn't she? A brainless little immigrant—couldn't think up a scheme like this in a thousand years! He's behind it—we ought to expel him from the Association!" Mr. Pugh banged on the dinner table till the china danced. "Mark my words, Grace, the day will come when I'll get my hands on him, and I'll squeeze him till he doesn't have a penny to buy a paper with!"

Grace Pugh, being a dutiful friend, called upon Amy Olney to tell her what Barnabas had done now—Barnabas and that woman. Grace had felt for some time that Amy was weakening—acting old, lonely, sentimental, and on the brink of forgiveness.

Amy wept. "Oh, Grace! And I thought he'd given her up!"

"It just goes to show how deep men are."

"Last night when he asked me to pass the cream, I almost answered. I almost said you're welcome when he said thank you." Amy sniffed, dabbing at her nose with her handkerchief. "But after this I'll have the strength to go to my grave in silence."

They nodded at each other soberly, like two barnyard fowls exchanging solemn greetings. "You're so brave, Amy! Everybody says you've borne up wonderfully. But, of course, it's absolutely the only way to cope with the situation."

A sweet remote smile played over Amy's face. "Grace, no man can understand and appreciate a really *good* woman."

When Grace had gone, Amy called Lucian to tell him she would get him the money he needed. Unfortunately Lucian was out. He'd gone to see Kitty McCarran, confident that he, at least, could manage her. But even if Amy had reached him, she would have been too late: the locust plague of his creditors was already descending.

Kitty would have given a good deal to have been forewarned of Lucian's visit. Her emotions were not in order when Leona opened

the door for him. In all the years that he had driven past her house, almost daily, on his way to the mill, they had not spoken. She had actually tried to keep inside the house when he would be passing, so that she would not even have to look at him. As if she were afraid of him? She told herself no; that it was because she hated him, hated the sight and memory of him. But what she felt when she looked at him was more like fear than hatred. And that could only mean that he still had some power over her, that she still felt some pull of longing toward him, that the thread of bondage, although the years and the pain had rotted it, had not yet broken, freeing her.

She knew he had come about the rent and about nothing else, yet her heart pounded when she looked at him. She knew that he was in a bad, an untenable position, and that it was partly her own sharp dealing that had put him there. Yet she did not trust her wits to win against his charm and the powerful forces which she believed were allied with him. She had done well, fighting against him and his world. She had found the key, she thought, to the conquest of the Yankees and all their works. It was money: more and more and still more money. Property, with the deeds in the box at the bank and the rents coming in to pay off the mortgages and buy more property. That was what they understood and respected, and, she thought, it was the only thing. If she ever won over Lucian Olney and his tribe, it would be because she was finally richer than they. She had faith that such a day might really come, for she worked toward it with all her thought and energy. She spent most of her time searching for bargains in property, then haggling to get them cheaper still. Every cent she could save from her own adornment went into more property with a single-mindedness that was beginning to border on voracity. But she was a long way from being rich enough to win in a pitched battle with Lucian and his friends. Still, she had one advantage over them, had she but known it: she did not underrate her enemies as they underrated her.

Perhaps if things had worked out differently with Philip she would by now have had another passion. True, even when Philip had held her in his arms, it was Lucian she had longed for, Lucian she had cried out to. Philip had taken her when it suited him. And left her, when that suited him, to marry Leah. Not in deception, as Lucian had left her, but in mere coldness, through being finished with the thing. It had simply worn out for him long before he married Leah and long before it had worn out for her. Toward the end she had known that he made love to her only because he thought she wanted him to. Then

too, Rafe had been growing bigger, getting to the noticing age, and this had given the affair a furtiveness that Philip had complained of.

He had said, "It isn't worth it, Kitty, when both of us are pretending. You'd be sorry if Rafe noticed this and came to hate you for it."

And she had said, "We could be married, Philip. I've a little money now. We could use it for your inventions, maybe even to put you in business for yourself."

"It wouldn't work, Kitty. We'd both be miserable."

"Why? In Ireland there's many a marriage made that way, for the good of both, each having a little something and helping the other on in the world."

"This isn't Ireland. Sorry—but I'm not for sale to make a father for Lucian Olney's child. The truth is, we don't even enjoy sleeping together any more."

It had always annoyed Kitty to be reminded that she—that any woman—could enjoy passion. "That's not all there is to marriage!"

"No. But for people of strong appetites, like us, it's a large, important part. And for the rest—we're just too different. We don't even respect and like the same things. When you come down to it, we don't really have anything to talk about."

He was lying, she felt, talking around the real reason. The old myths came back with all their force, and for a moment, as she looked at Philip's lean honest face, a wave of sickness engulfed her. No matter what she did, nor how much money she had, nor how beautiful she was, she could not batter down the power of the myth. "It's because I'm not decent," she had said, sullenly. "No man will ever marry a woman like me."

"You know, I don't think that's true, Kitty. If I still loved you, it wouldn't matter to me."

Her temper had flared up. "What's wrong with me, then? Am I so homely, or slovenly, or——"

"But Kitty! You don't love me either! Are you trying to make a hell for both of us like the one Rosie and Andrew are living in?"

She had pleaded, "Can't I learn to love you? Can't I?"

"No. It's not like algebra or Latin. You don't learn love, you feel it."

All the pretence of her nights with Philip then oppressed her—a sum of guilt she must deny. "You can't know what I feel!"

"But I know if something's missing. It's as if—well, as if you were using the love to get something else."

"You think I can't love?" she cried in despair. "Not anyone?"

"I don't know, Kitty. I shouldn't think that, though. But I know you can't love me."

"I loved Lucian," she had confessed. "I did! Until I was nearly crazy from the longings."

He had looked at her strangely, as if he knew that here, too, there had been something else, something she'd been using the love for. Then he'd stood up to go. "I hope you did, Kitty. It's too bad you couldn't have married him. You and he would have got along fine. Are you still going to be my friend, Kitty?"

And she'd said yes, she would be his friend. But she'd never forgiven him for marrying Leah.

As she looked at Lucian, she knew the sour taste of triumph, like an acid setting her teeth on edge. Because at last he had come crawling. So she'd been right: it was money, after all, that gave one power over these people. Not beauty, not kindness, not charity, but merely having the whip hand over them in a deal. Yet her heart continued to pound as if this were a lovers' meeting.

He bowed formally, but Leona spoiled the effect of it by tittering behind his back. He glared at her, and she scampered back to the kitchen. "It's gracious of you to see me, Kitty. You're as beautiful as ever. Have you found the fountain of youth?"

Her eyes shifted from his face. "I'll have my money now."

He sat down in the chair nearest hers. It was a rocker, which put him at a disadvantage. It was, in fact, the replica of one Adelaide had bought for his own parlour: massive, black oak upholstered in bottle-green plush, hard, discouraging comfort. "Kitty, don't you think we're being awfully silly?"

"My money, if you please. In a matter of business there's no need to discuss anything else."

"How is my—er—my son?"

"Fine. He's away at school."

"Um. I thought I hadn't seen him around lately. Well, that must make things a little more pleasant for you."

"How do you mean?" she asked sharply.

"Aren't your relations with him a little difficult? Or have you told him his father died before he was born?"

"You owe me three thousand dollars, Lucian. If you came for any reason other than to pay it, you can get out."

"You're a very clever business woman, Kitty. I admire that, you know. For a girl like you to come up from nothing to—well, the way Philpott talks, you must own half the tenements in town now. To do

that in a hardshell town like this took real courage—brains, too. Of course, we both know that money isn't everything, but it helps, doesn't it?"

"It'd help you now, if you had it, wouldn't it, Lucian?" She chuckled, and to him it sounded like throttled meanness.

He could not endure being laughed at. He jumped from the chair, which rocked on by itself in anticlimax. He went to the window and stood with his back to her. "I've been thinking for some time, Kitty, that we should get together on the mill. How would you like a half interest in it?"

She laughed aloud. "A half interest in your debts? D'you think I'm crazy?"

"You're not as smart as I thought, if you believe those rumours. Mr. Pugh and I started them deliberately, so we could buy in the stock cheap. We're going to reorganize and expand——"

"Are you, now?"

"Of course, Pugh doesn't know I'm here. He'd hit the ceiling if he did. Philpott doesn't know either. Men like that don't understand women of your calibre, Kitty. They think all women are fools when it comes to business. But I've been watching you, and it seems to me you and I together could run this mill so it'd be really modern. It'd set the whole town on it's ear—having a woman superintendent in a mill. Be a lot of scandal, I suppose, but I guess we're grown up enough now to take a little scandal in our stride. Then——"

"And you're going to give me all this just to forget the ground rent, Lucian?" she asked softly.

"Well, you'd have to buy in a little of the stock, I suppose—just for the sake of appearances. But that wouldn't amount to anything for you. With the price it is now, you could get a fifty per cent interest for—oh, say fifty or sixty thousand dollars."

Then Kitty really hated him. He knew she had no such sum, and that she never would have. He was mocking her, mocking her pathetic little fortune, mocking her bitter climb up out of the scum where he'd found her and wanted to leave her. "Pay your rent and get out!" she screamed. "Before I call my dog to chew you into bits!"

He turned on her savagely. "You're afraid! You haven't the courage to stand up against them, have you? At heart you're still nothing but a little Irish chippy, scared to death of the people higher up! Scared to——"

"So now I'm afraid, am I? Well, that I'm not, Lucian Olney. You thought when you kicked me down first, I'd stay down, didn't you?"

And now you come crawling like the snake you are because it's you that's down, for a change. And this is the knowing you can put in your black heart, Lucian. The pauper isn't living I'm afraid of, and you're a pauper. As for you cheating me out of my money the way you've cheated me out of everything else, I'm not afraid of that either. It's three thousand dollars that's owing me, and I'll have it now with no more fancy talk, or I'll have your mill."

He had never wanted anything so much as he wanted to take the money from his pocket and throw it in her face. That being impossible, he did what he considered next best. He produced his cheque-book, and sitting with dignity at the long oak table he wrote her a cheque which he left beneath the aspidistra plant. There was no money to cover the cheque, but at least it made possible a grand exit. It took care of today; and the God of the Olneys, a Jupiter in blue serge eternally alert to the welfare of the managerial class, would look out for tomorrow.

When the bank refused to cash Lucian's cheque, Kitty took it to Barnabas, who also refused to do anything about it. Personal feelings aside, he thought Lucian's mill a bad investment. The ground rent contract, amounting to a perpetual mortgage, was bad; the location uneconomical, the design of the building antiquated, and the machinery outmoded.

He was not even sure there was a good future for the best mills in New England. The time of easy money was gone. He could look back and see that from 1900 on the business had suffered from a creeping malaise. Wages had been cut until the poverty of the workers created an aura of dreary depression that hung like a dingy cloud over the town. Yet costs went up as the Legislature passed more and more restrictive labour laws. The market was glutted with cheap Southern goods. Taxes were becoming an unbearable burden. The town seemed to think the mills existed only to be milked. It assessed each mill on its number of spindles and looms, and the newer the machinery, the higher the taxes. What inducement was there, then, to cut costs by risking capital in new equipment that saved labour and increased production? Men were still cheaper than machines in New England.

His own coarse goods mill was down. He managed to keep his fine goods mills operating because he was a shrewd cotton buyer and because such new machinery as he had was in them. And his chief competitors were also in New England, suffering from the same disadvantages that affected Barnabas. In the circumstances, to meddle with Lucian's mill would be a foolish, quixotic gesture. Lucian, a poor



business man, must learn his lesson. There was no sin, in Barnabas's world, quite comparable to that of allowing oneself to be a poor business man.

He told Kitty she would have to file her proceedings for foreclosure and take her chances, with Lucian's other creditors, in the courts.

As if there was a conspiracy of the rich to defeat her, the court gave the buildings to the contractor who had built them. The machine manufacturers took the machinery. The coal company took the coal, the cotton brokers the cotton, and the cloth in the warehouses was dumped on the market. The small sum it brought was distributed among those who held cash claims against Lucian. They got three cents on the dollar.

The contractor paid Kitty's claim, as he had to lest she foreclose. Through the summer the mill stood abandoned, its windows staring across the farmlands like black, blind eyes. She told herself she did not care, so long as she received her rent. But she did care, for she had nothing from her tenements. The workers, seeing no prospect of the mill opening again, moved back into town, crowding into the homes of relatives which were already overcrowded. They left owing Kitty rent, and there was nothing she could do about it, since they weren't worth suing.

But she had the bleak satisfaction of knowing that Lucian didn't own anything any more. He'd even lost his cottage on the Hill, and all his furniture had been sold off at auction. She'd gone, just for fun, and found the furniture wasn't a bit better than her own. She bought some of Adelaide's best china and some linen monogrammed with the initial "O". Then it occurred to her that there really was no reason why she shouldn't buy the house. She paid the unheard of sum of four thousand dollars for it. She decided not to live in it, however, for it might make Mr. Barnabas Olney think she was now so well-off that he could forget about her and Rafe. Although the little cheques she got from her trust fund didn't amount to anything—not to a woman of property like herself—she felt she had a right to them.

She rented the house to the Rubashevskis, who had set up in a fine new store selling nothing but furniture. There were no living quarters in this store, and Mr. Rubashevski had put every cent into the new business, so he couldn't buy a house. Kitty often thought of how Lucian must feel when he passed his old home and saw a Jew living in it. It must make him mad enough to chew nails.

It rather galled her, though, that Lucian was not humble in disgrace.

He still rode around town with his smiling air of possession, driving a new red Cadillac which Ezra Pugh had given Adelaide. This irritated Kitty excessively. And he always bowed to her with a look of sardonic triumph in his eyes. As if he knew that after he'd left her on that bitter day she'd cried her eyes out because he'd asked not for herself but for her money. Oh, there was no way to get the better of the rich! They even went through bankruptcy and still came out rich!

Kitty was kept busy that summer helping Miss Bess with the clerical work for Andrew's campaign. Once, while they were addressing envelopes in Miss Bess's parlour, Kitty said, "You'd think he'd be ashamed now, wouldn't you? To go about, bold as brass, and him in such terrible disgrace."

Silence said, "I understand he needs a good long rest. I met Adelaide in Brown's the other day, and she said Lucian was simply swamped with offers. All sorts of places are clamouring to have him as treasurer or superintendent, but the mills are all in the South or in New York, and Adelaide can't bear to move so far from Mommer and Popper. And dear Lucian is exhausted, just wore himself out fighting all those dishonest people who were trying to destroy him. Adelaide thinks he'd have a brain fever if he didn't have this chance to lie on the beach at the Harbor and see nobody but his kind friends, who understand. That's why they didn't go to Europe. Nowadays you meet such riff-raff in Europe, and in his exhausted state poor Lucian couldn't cope with riff-raff."

Kitty did not understand Silence's sarcasm. She believed, like Adelaide, that Lucian really had had all those offers, and to know this made her furious. "I can't abide that Adelaide Olney. She's so ugly—sure it makes me shiver to look at her, all fat and blotchy, and those awful clothes she wears. It's a wonder how he can bring himself to touch her."

"He can though—she's pregnant again. She's an awful fool, and I don't like her, but I do think she's pathetic."

"*Pathetic!* With all her money?"

"Mommer and Popper Pugh go with the money, and if she hadn't money, she wouldn't be saddled with Lucian. Nothing more tragic could happen to a woman than to have Lucian for a husband."

"He's a wicked liar, that's sure—nothing but a beast for all his airs and handsome looks." Kitty doubled her fist and pounded on the stamps with unnecessary vigour.

"How d'you know so much about him? Just from collecting your rents?"

"Oh, you hear things, now. I don't know why we bother with all this, Miss Bess. Andrew hasn't a chance, not with all those rich people against him."

"Oh, I don't know. Things work out—gives you queer notions about fate, watching them. It about broke my heart when I couldn't get Andrew on the Republican ticket—there's just no solid future for Democrats. Then as soon as I reconcile myself to knowing he can't win, what happens? Roosevelt fights with Taft and walks out and starts this Bull Moose thing. I wouldn't be surprised if Wilson got in, and a lot of Democrats like Andrew with him. Of course it's shocking bad for business to have a Democrat in the White House, but he is for suffrage, and that's the important thing."

With the candour of the outsider to whom the whole American election process was comical and undignified, Kitty said, "I can't see that business is so good now. All the mills down, and it's close on a year since I've had any rents from the tenements."

"That's just because supply has outstripped demand," said Silence, taking comfortable refuge in cliché, since in fact she was ignorant of economics. "It has nothing to do with the Administration. Too bad, though. As a Democrat, Andrew just doesn't stand a chance in the long run. You can't build a career on a third party fluke like this. And people simply don't have confidence in Democrats."

"It's all such a wild scheme, Miss Bess. Andrew's just a *weaver*. He'll never get to be important. Especially the way he's always talking against the rich."

"Well, even John D. Rockefeller only has one vote. And people like Andrew. They certainly turn out to hear him speak."

"It's only because the mills are down and they've nothing else to do."

"Um. I hope you're wrong. It's true they turn out to listen to William Jennings Bryan, and it doesn't mean a thing."

"That Rosie is certainly giving herself airs. Now they've all moved in with the Rubashevskis, and in my very own house I bought, mind you, it's as much as my life's worth to set foot in it. And she told Rafe to his face I was a bad woman. He's crazy about the Rubashevskis, and now if he wants to see them, he has to go down to the store."

"My, Kitty, Rafe's getting big and grown up."

"And saucy. The other night when Father Manfred came to collect for the orphanage, Rafe talked back to him. Imagine, my son talking up to the priest! I was that ashamed! I gave him a good whipping when the Father left, but once the heresy gets started it's a hard thing to root out, Miss Bess, and that's the truth."

Silence felt great pity for Rafe, and, momentarily, sharp hatred of Kitty. "What did they argue about?"

"Oh, what he learns in school. Rafe said they went out and saw rocks and things, and that proves the earth is billions and billions of years old. And the Father said, 'But it's a Protestant school and we must remember there is no truth outside the one true religion.' And Rafe said, 'But it hasn't anything to do with religion, it's science.' Whatever that is," said Kitty in a disgusted aside. "The Father was good and patient with him, like he expected boys to be wicked and sinful. He just said, 'Let's not call it science, Rafe. Secular learning is a better term.' Those were his very words. 'And it's full of pitfalls,' he said. And Rafe got mad and yelled at him, 'But it's true, it's *true*!' So I told him to go to his room till he could learn respect for the Father. I don't know what'll become of that boy, Miss Bess, if he gets his head full of Protestant delusions."

Silence said drily, "You can always put him in a Catholic school."

"The very thing the Father said. But it seems a pity, now he's made all those friends. Such rich boys! And they invite him for vacations and all. The little boy he visited at Easter in Boston—did you know his father owns a whole steamship line?"

"That's very nice," said Silence. "Has he anything else to offer Rafe besides second-hand steamships?"

Kitty looked down at the envelopes sullenly. "You wouldn't talk that way, Miss Bess, if you'd ever been in the fix I was in."

"Perhaps not. It's just that I don't really trust money. It doesn't seem quite real to me. It's too easy to lose."

"It's real enough when you don't have it," said Kitty.

"Oh, yes! It's when you have a superabundance of it and you don't have anything else that it gets to seem a little—well—just a little rancid."

4

Everyone at school looked forward to vacations. Therefore, in order not to seem different, Rafe also had to look forward to them. But with him it was a pretence, although sometimes he pretended so hard that he almost convinced himself that home had changed during his absence, that this time he was going to like it when he got there, that this time he was going to have fun, this time he wasn't going to be lonely.

But during the summer of 1912 it was worse than it had ever been in his whole life. Aunt Silence was all mixed up with Andrew Hawkes's

election, and when he went to see her he had to address envelopes or he was sent out to put the advertising into people's mailboxes. His mother was all mixed up with a lawsuit over the mill buildings. He couldn't go to see Aunt Minerva because Rosie Hawkes didn't want her children to associate with a bastard, and besides, Aunt Minerva and Mr. Rubashevski were all mixed up with their big new store.

He was in everybody's way.

That was probably why he argued with Father Manfred. He knew it was wrong, but he was tired of being shoved around. If they thought he was a nuisance when he was being good, he might as well explode things and be bad. Besides, he was right and the priest was wrong, and in her heart his mother knew this. For some reason he couldn't understand, by some twisted, obscure logic, it made his mother very angry that he should be right and the priest should be wrong. His mother had whipped him for his rightness, and because he was in the way, and because—perhaps—she thought it was good for him to understand that he didn't really belong in his own home. The whipping was symbolic. What his mother couldn't say in words she made the switch say.

Thus he absorbed the warning: don't love too much because it always hurts. Don't get involved. Just keep quiet and don't tell anybody anything. Keep it all inside, in the dark, unknown. And for God's sake, don't come home any more than you can help.

His mother told him to go to see Mr. Barnabas Olney because if he didn't Mr. Olney might forget him and stop doing things for him. He went, shrinking inside, because if the others were busy, Mr. Olney would be busier. It stood to reason. This was one last rejection he must steel himself to endure, knowing he could not endure it. Best get it over with though, and then be alone forever.

If a lonelier person than Rafe existed, it was Barnabas. Unlike Rafe, he had not learned to guard his emotions in his youth. He had not learned the meaning of rejection until he was too old to bend to animosity. He must continue to walk upright through the town, seeing the averted faces, responding to the cool, unwilling nods, and he must find what sustenance he could in pride. Not until Rafe walked into his office suddenly, with no warning, did Barnabas realize that his spirit was dying for lack of love of another human being. He looked into the boy's eyes, so like his own, and he saw the buried sadness in them. He looked at the young face—the Olney face—and saw it

drawn taut in defensive politeness, a mask raised to take the oncoming blow.

He reached out his hand toward his grandson. "Rafe. You've come to see me. *Me?*"

With shock, shuddering inwardly like an earthquake, Rafe heard the cry of that other human heart. He did not know why he said this but he answered, "You needn't worry about anything, sir. I'm right here with you."

Barnabas's smile wavered doubtfully, as if he, not Rafe, were ten years old. The control he had imposed upon himself all his life snapped like a broken iron band. He walked to the window, turning his back to Rafe so that the child might not see his emotion. But Rafe knew. The bondage of time fell away from them. Rafe's youth and Barnabas's age dissolved in a timeless limbo of feeling. Rafe went to Barnabas and put his arm around him and leaned his head against his grandfather and comforted him, but without words.

Rafe spent the rest of the summer with Barnabas, even sleeping sometimes in the big house on the Hill, which felt more like home than his own home. He ate many meals there. Mrs. Olney was at Westport Harbor, therefore this disturbed no one; although in the kitchen Pat O'Hearn made much ado over it. O'Hearn had been displaced by a chauffeur. He was now merely a hired hand, as he said bitterly, somebody to haul wood and wash windows. It was enough to make anyone bitter; and then to see that little bastard worming his way into Mr. Barnabas's heart and pocketbook, aiming to steal what was rightfully Mr. Lucian's—it was downright galling, that it was.

The two went off on long rides in the country, driven by the new chauffeur. Barnabas rented horses from the livery stable, and they went riding. They went to the circus and up to Boston to buy Rafe's new clothes for school. As if that were not enough, Rafe went to work in the mill as an office boy. The whole thing was blatantly shocking. Word got to Amy Olney in Westport Harbor, strengthening her resolve. Word got to the Pughs, proving to them that Lucian's collapse had been all Barnabas's fault. Word got to Kitty, who took immense satisfaction in the turn of events.

These two rejected beings, properly shunned by all decent people, behaved as if they were happy. Naturally one could not expect a proper display of remorse in a pushy little bastard; but that *Barnabas Olney* should openly flaunt his iniquity, glorying in it, gave the town collective apoplexy. People who had previously been inclined to make charitable excuses for him could do so no longer. Everyone began to

pity Lucian. They began to understand that Lucian's efforts to save his mill had been an epic struggle against the forces of evil. Because, of course, a man who would flaunt his bastard in the face of a respectable town was capable of anything, even of driving his own son into financial ruin.

As a topic of conversation during the summer of 1912, Barnabas vied in popularity with the presidential campaign. People with nimble minds had no trouble perceiving that Barnabas's conduct damaged the Republican cause. When the scandal seeped down to the workers, as it was bound to do, wouldn't they naturally conclude that since an immoral man supported Mr. Taft, Taft himself was immoral? Ezra Pugh was so sure they would that he openly advocated starting up the mills on Election Day, just to make certain the hands couldn't get to the polls.

5

Ezra Pugh had lost much of his taste for Lucian. He was irritated because something would have to be done for him. Grace insisted that it be done without delay, lest Lucian be forced to accept an outside position and take Adelaide and the children far away, where, Grace dolefully reminded Ezra, they might never see them again. Ezra sourly doubted that Lucian was besieged with offers, although he dutifully spread the story that this was so. He owed it to himself to blow up his son-in-law's prestige. To have an incompetent son-in-law, one addicted to sending mills into bankruptcy, was a reflection on Pugh's own judgment.

Shame like Barnabas Olney's was a serious matter, but it was merely a moral lapse. Financially, Barnabas was still pure. A moral lapse, however regretted, was a second-class sin. Society simply closed its ranks against the sinner and went on as before. A financial lapse, however, weakened the whole economic structure. When Lucian allowed his mill to fail he created in Ezra's mind the horrid suspicion that Lucian might be a little unsound. He might not have the know-how. There might be something *soft* in him. Of course, he'd never given out Christmas baskets like his father, nor pampered the hands with running water and electricity, but a basic softness in the breed would not necessarily take the same form in each generation. Ezra should have known better than to allow his daughter to marry an Olney. They were old stock, worn out, past their peak. There were a lot of black sheep in the Olney family: doctors, a couple of scientists,

a professor at Harvard who was no better than a socialist, that suffragette freak Silence Bess. An Olney had once run off to Europe to study art, and one of Barnabas's uncles had published a book of poems. Ezra wanted to be fair, but there was no doubt that bad blood had a way of cropping out, from generation to generation, as the Bible said.

In justice he had to admit that the Olney vagaries, until Lucian's mill failure, had been of no importance to anyone. They had created mere freaks who, having never had any connection with business, had never been in a position to do society any real harm. They'd made their beds far from the mills, and they would lie in them until they went to their graves, unhonoured and unsung. But when Lucian allowed a mill to fail, hundreds of stockholders lost money, property was desecrated, and real values disappeared. Banks suffered loss, machinery was sold down the river at laughable prices, tenements failed to bring in rents, stores lost business, brokers lost sales. The circle of woe widened far beyond one town: one mill stock rendered worthless depressed the whole market, making it difficult to manipulate another stock as one might see fit. Coal mines lost a customer, cotton growers a market, and the ruthless Southern manufacturers moved in to close the vacuum so that clever operators like Ezra could not gain even a momentary advantage from a competitor's demise.

Looked at in the proper light, it became plain that one incompetent businessman could shake the very foundations of civilization. Multiply Lucian by ten, by a hundred, and what did you have? Probably the end of the world—or at least the end of the world as Ezra knew it. A financial lapse assumed such magnitude that one could hardly understate it by naming it a sin. There should be another word to describe this crime that struck at the very roots of society. If Lucian were really incompetent, he was a saboteur of civilization. And Ezra, who had never missed an occasion to lay burnt offerings on the altar of business, harboured this viper in his home. Ezra, of all people, was required to do something about Lucian. That was ironic.

All Pugh's mills were down, and most of those on which he served upon the boards, but he managed to keep so busy during the summer of 1912 that he found little time to waste in Westport Harbor, where Lucian was resting. Whenever he did see Lucian, Ezra would fix upon him a piercing glance which proclaimed that Lucian could no more hide his shortcomings from Ezra than he could hide them from God. He would scowl, grunt a greeting, and demand in a stentorian voice, "Well, sir, what are your plans now?"



Lucian would murmur something about an offer from a mill in England or Alabama, or from a cotton brokerage house in New Orleans. Ezra would snort that England was backward, dying on its feet; that Southern mills would never amount to anything, mere flash in the pan; that it was a pretty serious step to go down from management to brokerage—anybody could be a broker, just a confession of failure. And what connections did he have in New Orleans anyhow?

Adelaide would intercede timidly, "Papa, Lucian's so *tired!*"

"What's he tired from?"

And Grace, more aggressively: "Now, Ezra! The dear boy's been through a frightful ordeal. What he needs is a nice long rest."

From behind his barricade of females, Lucian would make what Pugh called "a snide remark" about the Fall River bourgeoisie which seemed to think the world ended at the Taunton River. If there was one word Ezra hated above all others, it was "bourgeois". People who used it (always with a sneer) were either labour agitators or intellectuals, and of the two Pugh didn't know which was worse.

Grace had faith in Lucian's offers, however. She and Amy Olney were able to work themselves up into a serious state of alarm lest, in their old age, their children be torn from them and set adrift on foreign shores. Not a single offer ever came from safe places like Fall River and New Bedford. Grace kept after Ezra, running the gamut from blandishment to threat through all the nuances of nagging. If necessary Ezra would have to buy a mill and put Lucian in charge of it. "And he's so *clever*, dear. Barnabas wouldn't dare hound him to death in one of *your* mills."

"Buy a mill now? With the whole industry flat on its back? Are you crazy?"

"But couldn't you buy something cheap now? It's frightful the way mill stock keeps going down, and nobody pays hardly any dividends, and——"

"Women know nothing about business, Grace. In all probability that damned Democrat will be elected. Where will we be then? He'll destroy the entire American way of life!"

"But people have to have cloth sooner or later. You know that."

"If that college professor gets in people won't have money to buy cloth. You know who's behind him—all the freaks in the country, like Silence Bess. What do they care if he ruins the whole business

system so long as he gives the vote to those fool women! Grace, have you any idea what it'll mean to this country if he reduces the tariff?"

"Of course it would be terrible, dear, but Lucian——"

"Damn Lucian! If that socialist professor gets in it won't be only Lucian who'll be bankrupt. The whole country will be flooded with cheap English cloth. He wouldn't only break up our Association and force us to compete with each other—he'll force us to compete with the whole world! He'll even put the South out of business! And you're asking me to buy a mill for Lucian!"

He always left the Harbor in a fury, going back to town to pace through his empty mills, to sit in his office waiting for orders that did not come, to buy and sell cotton which did nothing but go down, and to attend board meetings and listen to gloomy financial reports. Every time he saw one of the *New York World* cartoons wickedly depicting Taft and Roosevelt as the Gold Dust Twins, mocking the sacred virtues of the high protective tariff, his blood pressure went up. He was so certain of a pauper's future that he liquidated a large portion of his mill stock at a loss. He convinced Amy Olney that she should do the same.

But even before the election, business began to improve. As if a malign fate pursued him, the stocks he and Amy had sold began to rise. Enraged at this injustice of Providence, he went again to Amy and told her the only way they could now save their money was to put it into a new mill for Lucian. "Get in on the ground floor and ride the boom," he said. "Looks as if maybe this war in the Balkans will spread—Europe's pretty jittery over it." She gave him all her money, not even bothering to get a receipt because Ezra, being one of themselves, was perfectly trustworthy. She wished she could tell Barnabas what she had done, but even to enjoy such a triumph, she would not break her silence.

Ezra bought the buildings Lucian had lost, much to the relief of the contractor who had been stuck with them and who saw nothing ahead but the bleak prospect of paying rent and taxes on them forever. Pugh, daring to do something revolutionary, founded a company to set up a finishing plant. He issued stock to himself and Amy Olney. He gave Adelaide stock so that Lucian might vote at the meetings, but he'd be damned if he'd give any to Lucian. He was doing enough for that boy. He installed Lucian as a treasurer and one of his own cousins as superintendent—a bright boy who'd graduated from the Textile School and was anxious to work his way up from the bottom.

Didn't know much as yet, of course, but he was a Pugh, and the Pughs were always safe.

Lucian, who perforce had learned something about the manufacture of cloth, knew nothing about finishing. That hardly mattered. Everyone agreed there was nothing to finishing cloth. The risk was in the manufacture. The South wasn't doing much finishing yet. Now Pugh could sell his high-priced cloth to Lucian, and even if Lucian couldn't make a profit, Pugh could. Gave a man a comfortable feeling of security to control everything, from the raw cotton to the finished print. He even began to feel better about the election. Be only four years, and in so short a time perhaps even a Democrat couldn't do much harm. Not, at least, while such men as Ezra guarded the bastions of civilization.

Kitty once more happily collected her rents. They provided her with so large a surplus over her living expenses that she bought a Cadillac, the replica of Lucian's. She was richer than anyone in her circle of acquaintances except Barnabas Olney. The Rubashevskis might be worth more, but they had no money to spend because they were deeply in debt with their new store, which Kitty thought far too ambitious an undertaking for ordinary junk dealers.

Nevertheless, she was discontented. It galled her that Lucian was right back in the mill as if he'd never been bankrupt. He'd even bought a finer house on the Hill than the one he'd been forced to sell, and Adelaide had a new sealskin coat that made her look dumpier and uglier than ever. It would be a blessing if something happened to Adelaide. Lucian would come crawling quickly enough then, begging Kitty to marry him. She'd have to do it, too, because she owed it to Rafe to make him legitimate. Yes, when Adelaide died and Kitty married Lucian, Kitty would be the Queen of Society. And judging from what she'd seen of the Yankees, she'd be the best looking queen it had ever had.

She was lonely. Even during the vacations she saw little of Rafe—just as well, perhaps, since they quarrelled about everything now that he was getting so uppity and know-it-all. Andrew and his family had gone to Boston, taking Gramma with them. Kitty never heard from them—natural when you remembered how nasty Rosie was and how she gave herself airs now that Andrew was in the Legislature. Minerva said he was even going to college to learn the law—imagine, a grown man going to school! But Minerva said if a man was going to make laws, the least he could do was to find out what the ingredients were that he'd have to mix together. Kitty got these bits of gossip about

Andrew at rare intervals, because she saw little of the Rubashevskis. They were working day and night in their new store. And Silence Bess was away stumping the country for suffrage, making one last effort to put it across before the Republicans got in again.

Kitty had nothing to do with her time and money, except to buy clothes and embroider or crochet and drive around in her new Cadillac and collect her rents. It was odd how much she missed Gramma. A crazy old woman like that. Who'd have thought it possible?

## PART SEVEN

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### The Golden Years

The years of the First World War were the most satisfying of Kitty's life. Her disgrace didn't seem important any more, even to herself. Others had no time to bother with so old-fashioned a sin, committed by such an obscure person. Indeed, it almost seemed as if people had no time to bother with any sin at all. And the relationship which the town imagined to exist between Kitty and Barnabas was now so old that it had become almost respectable. People had to admit that if ever an affair had been conducted with circumspection, it was that one. They did not go so far as to welcome Barnabas back into their social midst: they'd got into the habit of doing without him, and he'd got into the habit of doing without them. Besides, decent people were still on Amy Olney's side, as they put it. And Kitty had of course never been in their social midst. They continued to ignore her, but without gossip or resentment. There were actually youngsters growing up who had never heard about the awful thing that she and Barnabas were supposed to have done.

The world glittered under a golden aura. Even the shadows twinkled. Everybody—except the soldiers in the trenches—was devoting himself exclusively to getting rich, as if they had all found Kitty's solution for getting on with the world. The mills worked day and night, rolling out cloth and dividends. Wages climbed to unprecedented heights, and even Ezra Pugh didn't complain about them. Property values soared, and rents with them. Kitty bought tenement after tenement, piling first and second mortgages on them so that she could buy still more tenements. Then, when she had got in too deep with the mortgages, she would sell a building for four times what she paid for it, clear up some of the debt, and begin over. She devoted her whole heart and soul to the accumulation of money, loving not only the wealth, but the game of getting it. It was unalloyed excitement, with no taint of sin about it. Not one woman in ten thousand could win as she was winning at this man's game, where each

encounter was a minor war, where enmity lurked under every shrewd bargain, where fortunes were built on rivalry and hatred, never on love, and where any softness meant defeat. Let other women have their husbands, their children, and their respectability. She knew that in their hearts they envied her, the one who was beautiful, free, and rich. She no longer felt that she was fighting her way through the morass of a foreign world—that cold Protestant Yankee world that she could never understand. She'd found the secret path through it, the path that ran right into the inner citadel. Every dollar she made was like another soldier added to her legions.

She convinced herself that she had made herself over in their image, that she understood all their tricks and motives now. With every love she had failed: with Lucian, with Philip, and now, she felt dimly, with Rafe. She didn't understand why she had failed, that it was because, as Philip had told her, she always wanted to buy something with the love, because she'd always wanted to own the person she claimed to love. Well, she wasn't going to eat her heart out over it any more. It was money that bought the future in this world, and not love. She'd learned that now, and she wasn't going to forget it. Money justified her, justified everything. And the money would never let her down. She came slowly to believe that if she could only get enough of it she would be able to buy anything with it. Even love, if she should ever again feel the need for love.

Bridie McCarran came to live with her all the time. The old woman could not bear her life in Boston, where there were no mills. Deprived of her reason for living, she'd taken to wandering the streets, where she got lost. Andrew had no choice but to send her to Kitty, although Rosie found it very galling.

Rafe was growing strong and handsome, giving Kitty so little trouble that she was usually able to forget that he existed. He wrote her dutifully once a week, and if she was not too busy she answered. When she neglected to write for two or three weeks she'd buy him something expensive like an English cashmere sweater to make it up to him. No one could say she hadn't done everything in her power for Rafe. When he came home for vacations he spent most of his time with Barnabas Olney, so that he wasn't a nuisance even then.

Lucian also prospered. At last his speculations were successful: the price of cotton rose hysterically, and it was evident to everyone that it would never again drop. Ezra Pugh bought mill stock with his profits, though it too was soaring. Their wives, rejoicing in the temper of the times, renovated their houses, throwing out everything

that had belonged to their forbears and buying elephantine-grey mohair chairs and couches to replace it. They put oatmeal paper on the walls, which set off the new Maxfield Parrish prints, and they painted all the walnut woodwork white. Adelaide's triumph was a sunroom furnished in green wicker and floral cretonne. It remained a show-room for years, fading and immaculate, because it vacillated between unbearable heat in summer and agonizing cold in winter. Mrs. Pugh's great work was an aseptic kitchen where light glared uninhibited upon the expanses of white porcelain.

One day Kitty, who was also buying grey mohair, came face to face with Mrs. Pugh, Adelaide, and Amy Olney in Rubashevski's. The incident provided them all with excitement and satisfaction. The sight of such dowdy frumps was exhilarating to Kitty, but she was most interested in Adelaide, obviously the nervous, sickly, ineffectual creature that Mrs. Riggs's semi-annual reports pictured. There were rumours that Lucian was keeping a blonde, a vulgar woman with bobbed hair, and that he had set her up in an apartment in Providence. No one who had seen Adelaide, Kitty thought, could possibly blame him.

Adelaide found a naughty titillation in this glimpse of the awful woman who had ruined Barnabas Olney. The way she got herself up like a French fashion plate was intensely vulgar, but loose women were always smart, putting every cent of their immoral gains on their backs. As she approached forty Adelaide was as sheltered from rude reality as she had been at ten. Her notions of the behaviour and mentality of loose women were deliciously vague, though she wasn't *really* interested in such things. Adelaide didn't care much for sex, either first or second-hand.

To Amy the encounter brought renewed courage. Not that she would have weakened at this late date—no danger. Still, it was justification of her position to see the cause of it all walking the earth, bold as brass, beautiful as sin. She wondered when Barnabas sneaked off to see the creature. In the daytime, when he should have been at the mill? He was always home at night, shut into his study, reading his eternal books. Well, no one could say that Amy had failed in her duty. Lonely, suffering years they'd been, but she'd have her reward in Heaven. Amy had grown very religious in a Congregational sort of way. After all, one had to do something with one's time.

The three good women looked at the bad woman, then they looked at each other and smiled. Three male clerks stepped forward simultaneously to wait upon the bad woman, who forthwith bought the

very couch that Grace Pugh had had her eye on. "I can't imagine where she gets the money," said Adelaide innocently.

Grace said, "Well, I can. Really, I think we'd better run down to Brown's for a soda and come back later. Don't you?"

Kitty laughed to see them go. The clerks smiled in sympathy, trying to think which of them had said anything funny.

Rubashevski industriously ploughed his profits back into his business, except for one minor lapse. His daughter Leah and Philip Hawkes came back to Fall River, and Anton and Minerva were so overjoyed at this reunion that they bought a mansion on Highland Avenue big enough for all of them to live in until Philip got his new machine factory going. It happened to be the house once owned by the glove-factory people whom Ezra Pugh had finally driven out of town. That the house was next door to the Pughs meant nothing to the Rubashevskis. But Ezra found his "damned Jew" neighbours far more unwholesome than he'd found the "damned glove people". He saw every evidence that the Jews were taking over the town, getting rich hand over fist, profiteering from the war. (He was intensely patriotic.) He wished he had some Jews working for him so that he could fire them, just as a matter of principle. But for some reason the Jews didn't care for mills—too solid for them, probably.

Philip Hawkes wasn't a Jew, of course, but he might as well be. He was going to produce fancy gadgets he'd invented (or *said* he'd invented) for mill machinery. Well, Ezra wouldn't buy any of them. Not even the new carder Hawkes claimed he'd invented, though it was being manufactured by a solid old company in Lowell. It was supposed to clean itself mechanically, keep the workers from getting cotton fever, and keep the lint down in the air. Damned nonsense. Cotton fever, lint, and fires from lint were part of the Divine order for mills. Let Barnabas Olney try to change it, if he wanted to throw his money away. Ezra would have none of these silly innovations. At least he got the Association to agree not to rent or sell land to Philip for his factory.

Philip quietly bought land from Silence Bess. He borrowed the money he needed in Boston. Even Ezra's campaign to boycott the Hawkes gadgets failed to trouble Philip. He sold his machines in the South, where new mills were springing up every week and the demand for machinery was frantic. He grew rich contentedly, finding Southern money as spendable as Northern money.

But when weavers' wages soared to nine dollars a week and the eight-hour day came into nefarious being, Ezra could point to Philip



as the cause of it all. He was absolute proof that one outsider could send a whole stable economy straight to hell. Ezra knew for a fact that Hawkes paid machinists as high as thirty dollars a week just to polish metal and tighten screws. He kept a union shop too—had to, probably, with that crack-pot radical brother in the Legislature. Of course he only employed a couple-dozen men, but it was a beginning. Pugh was nobody's fool. He could see a straw in the wind as well as the next man, better than most. Jews! They were at the bottom of everything, he fumed.

He forbade his wife to buy anything, even a light bulb, at Rubashevski's. Quietly, she did as she pleased. Everyone was buying at Rubashevski's—really, it was the only decent furniture store in town. And what Ezra didn't know wouldn't hurt him.

2

Amy Olney's encounter with Kitty came at a time when her resolve needed stiffening. She would not have admitted it to a soul, but she was beginning to feel sorry for Barnabas. At first his loneliness had pleased her: when it became bad enough he'd beg her forgiveness. How he could do this was not clear, for if he spoke to her she left the room, she would not go to the telephone when he called, and she would not read any of the notes he sent her by the servants. Apparently she felt that when the time was ripe for forgiveness, she would know by instinct. Once, during the hard times of 1912, when that awful man got into the White House, she'd almost given in. Barnabas had looked so thin and tired, and he was so plainly worried about the election, and one of their own weavers, that terrible Andrew Hawkes, had betrayed him by getting elected to the Legislature, and that was the year Barnabas's "heart condition" had developed. Well, she'd been right on the verge of relenting when Lucian failed. It was fortunate she had a friend like Grace Pugh who kept her posted on everything, otherwise she'd never have known it was Barnabas who drove Lucian to the wall.

By 1917, however, she had softened once more. Barnabas gave up the unpleasant farce of trying to eat dinner with her, and now took all his meals in his study. This was a Pyrrhic victory for Amy, who soon began to realize how much courage her flagging will had gained from those interminable meals: Barnabas trying to pretend he wasn't suffering; his quiet voice saying, "The salt, please, my dear," which was

just his way of trying to cover up before the second maid. The light hung low over the table with a big square shade made of stained glass in many colours. Barnabas had a way of holding his head so that his white hair caught and reflected the prismatic light. He must have done it deliberately, knowing the halo-like effect made him resemble an overtaxed saint. You'd think, from the way he looked, that he was the injured party, not she.

When she could no longer feed her righteousness upon the daily spectacle of his unhappiness, her spirit wavered. Sometimes a whole week went by without her seeing Barnabas, unless she went out of her way to catch a glimpse of him. It made all her effort seem wasted, as if she'd given the best years of her life to a project that turned out to be worthless. She had never believed that she could be so lonely as she was now, night after night, eating dinner by herself while she knew Barnabas was actually enjoying himself in his study, alone with a snug fire, a book, and a glass of port.

She saw Kitty McCarran in the nick of time. As she said to Grace, "I can go on now, to the bitter end if I have to. Now I've seen her, I'll die before I'll speak to him."

And she did. In November, 1918, she died of influenza. She was terrified of this plague that stalked the country, striking wantonly. She talked darkly of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. She was certain that Barnabas, who took no precautions and went to work every day, would succumb to it before she had time to forgive him. She herself took every precaution. She avoided going out, and in the house she wore a gauze mask to protect herself from the servants' germs. She put sulphur in her shoes and always carried a penny on her person. If the penny turned black it was an infallible sign that the poison was being diverted from herself to the coin.

She was stricken on Armistice Day. Because of the excitement, it was twenty-four hours before Barnabas discovered that she was ill, and another day passed before he could get a doctor. All his money could not hire a nurse, nor a bed in the hospital. Mrs. O'Hearn had also caught the infection, and O'Hearn was of no use to anyone for he would not leave his wife's bedside. The parlour-maid did the cooking until she too caught the disease. Then everything devolved upon the second maid, an inexperienced girl who interrupted her continual terrified prayers only to say defensively, "But Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Mr. Olney, I only got me two hands, may the Lord forgive me."

Grace Pugh could not help him, for she was nursing Adelaide and two of her grandchildren. He tried to get Silence Bess, but Kitty

McCarran answered her telephone. "There isn't a soul to look after her but me, Mr. Olney, and she's that weak she can't hold up her head. Not a doctor's been near her either, since the day she came down with it. But I've had her name put in the Novena, and Leona—that's my maid—got better directly her name was called in the Novena. I'd be happy to do the same for Mrs. Olney, if you wouldn't think it presumptuous."

"Er—thank you, Miss McCarran. I'll see if I can persuade a doctor to call on Miss Bess. "

But no doctor would waste time driving so far to see one woman whose life was no more important than the lives of the thousands closer at hand. Besides, what could the doctor do for Silence? What could he do for any of them? Some would live and some would die—it was as simple as that, and as mysterious. Barnabas could only repeat what Samuel Pepys had said in similar circumstances: "May God have mercy on us, and on our souls."

He hesitated to intrude upon Amy when she was helpless to forbid the intrusion. The accumulated weight of the rejection that he had carried through all his middle life now deadened him to his deepest desire, which was to take Amy in his arms and comfort her as she approached the lonely gulf of death. He did not want her to die remembering the barren shambles they had made of their lives. But he was a civilized man. Politeness forbade him to add to her last suffering the thing she hated most: his presence and the sound of his voice.

He placed a chair in the hall outside her door, left open a crack so that he could hear her if she called out. He sat there day and night in the dim, quiet hall, half dozing much of the time, for he was bone tired. Finally, about midnight of the third day of Amy's illness, the doctor came. His eyes were red with fatigue, his feet stumbled with weariness on the stairs. He stayed with Amy no more than five minutes. When he left the room and bumped into Barnabas in the hall his face was impassive, stupefied with fatigue. His eyes were dull, as if the unremitting spectacle of death had veiled them with a cataract.

"Sorry," he murmured, and pushed by Barnabas.

Barnabas caught up with him on the stairs. "You're dead from lack of sleep, man. Let me give you coffee."

"Haven't time to drink it."

"Brandy then. You must take it or you can't go on."

The doctor stood in the hall and poured the liquor down his throat, half a tumbler full, like water. "Thanks. That helps. Stay with her. I doubt that she can live till morning."

"Can't you do *anything*?"

"No. Some die and some live. I don't know why. God in heaven, I don't even know what it is!"

Barnabas climbed the stairs slowly and went into Amy's room for the first time in fifteen years. She was unconscious, fighting for each rasping breath. He sat down by the bed and held her hand timidly, with apology. He began his lonely battle with the plague, using the only weapons he had: prayer, love, and the longing that she live.

She died as the little china clock on her mantel struck five with silly, merry chimes, like girlish laughter. He sat on, feeling the reluctance of all the living to leave the dead alone. He was filled with a vast, quiet stillness, a grief beyond tears because it was not merely grief for Amy. It was sorrow for the waste of her life, and of his life, and of all the lives he knew. And not because this plague now blasted the land; but because there was another plague that crept upon them all in infancy and crippled them and left them, when they died, with nothing but their cramped unlive years to offer to their gods.

3

In dying, Amy attracted far less notice than was her due. Her funeral was perfunctory, as were most funerals during the epidemic. Barnabas, Lucian, O'Hearn, and a few distant female relatives who made a speciality of funerals were the only mourners. All her other friends were ill themselves, attending someone who was ill, or afraid that if they went to a public gathering they would catch the infection. Like millions of others, Amy was huddled into the ground, sent on her dark way with a mumbled prayer, a half-hearted hymn, and an inaccurate obituary in the paper which no one had time to read. As a daughter of the managerial class she deserved something better: it was as if, in other times, a duchess had been buried without ceremony.

While Barnabas settled her affairs, he retained a lingering sense of her presence. He found letters he had written her during their courtship. As he read them, he remembered himself in these words that now seemed to have been written by a stranger: himself in the ardour of his spent youth. Then he burned them. That was gone, all gone; and there would come a day when he, too, would die. Best not leave these tatters of a more gracious time for ruder eyes to see. Dead love has a way of turning a comical face to the unscathed multitude.

A fading fragrance of lilac and orris root clung to all her clothes. As he sorted them, he felt inadequate, for he did not understand some of the garments and he was often embarrassed by them. They made him realize poignantly the wall of secrecy that surrounds every life. He gave her clothes to the Salvation Army for the poor, and her lace to Adelaide, who did not want it because lace was out of fashion. For reasons unknown to him Barnabas put Amy's jewellery in the bank vault. He did not want to give it to Adelaide nor to Lucian to be sold and the proceeds wasted in Lucian's gambling ventures. Perhaps some day one of Adelaide's little girls . . .

He went through her desk, finding old grocery lists, telephone numbers with no names, snapshots of people he thought he'd never seen, old greetings cards, invitations to functions long since gone by, childhood letters from Lucian, letters from Amy's girlhood friends, newspaper clippings which seemed now to have no point, and two whole papers describing the death and funeral of Edward VII. He burned almost everything, and paid the bills he found. He left the desk neat and impersonal, with no marks of Amy Olney except a stain where she had spilled some violet ink and the broken lock where she had prised open one of the little drawers with a nail file.

When he settled her financial affairs he was surprised to discover that the careful investments he had made for her were gone. All her money was in stock in Lucian's mill. Barnabas, with due process of law, gave it to Lucian, for certainly Amy would have wanted that. This secret investment, more than anything else, showed Barnabas the depth of her long animosity.

Thus Amy Olney was dispersed and the ragged ends of her life made tidy. When it was done, the recent years of pain and silence faded from Barnabas's mind and he remembered Amy as the girl he had courted and married. Rather foolish, perhaps, not the prettiest girl he had known, nor the most sensible, but his girl, his wife. What had happened in the later years must surely have been his fault. She had no doubt needed terribly to trust Lucian, and she had not needed to trust Barnabas. Then, although it had been against his will, he had given her what she needed.

The town did not sympathize with Barnabas in his loss. The people closed their ranks tighter against him, heaping the collective grief of their own losses upon him, as if it were a guilt. They were sure he was relieved to have Amy dead, out of his way at last. Now he would marry that woman. Some even doubted the wisdom of God who claimed the innocent and spared the wicked. Many of the women

mourned over the pity of it, the waste: that Barnabas, one of the richest men in town, and from such a fine old family, should be rendered ineligible on moral grounds for marriage to a decent woman. There must be no compromise with right, however. The forces of outraged virtue, gathered under the leadership of Grace Pugh, presented an unbroken phalanx which Barnabas did not even try to storm. Grace reminded everyone that it was the least they could do for poor Amy. For her sake they must continue to remind Barnabas that he had nothing to live for—absolutely nothing.

They forgot that he had Rafe. Many years had passed since Barnabas had felt that the operation of a cotton mill was enough to live for. Since he had lost Lucian he had recognized that he had no reason to accumulate more money, unless it was to make Amy a richer widow. Now Amy was gone, too. Yet he couldn't stop making money. The less he needed it, the more he made, as if the devil, having singled him out for favours, first turned the gold to ashes and then buried Barnabas in the dust. There was nothing to do with the money but leave it to Rafe and hope that the boy would find a better use for it than Barnabas had done. There was also not a chance, the law being what it was, that Rafe would ever see a penny of it unless Barnabas married Kitty McCarran and acknowledged the boy as his own.

Even after he had decided to do this, however, he did not know that he would be able to go through with it. He still felt an active revulsion against Kitty McCarran. He always thought of her as of someone unbearably ugly, so that when he saw her he was surprised to find her still serenely beautiful. But he finally convinced himself that what he felt about her was not important. With Rafe as his son, he could justify his life: he need not feel this ghastly all-consuming shame when he contemplated the sum of his achievements. Thus he put Kitty out of his mind even as he dressed to go courting her.

He called upon Kitty in January, 1920, a year and a few months after Amy's death. Rafe had returned to school after his Christmas holidays. Barnabas felt that he would have been unable to carry out his project under the boy's clear gaze. He even took some trouble to discover the maid's night out: he was ashamed of what he was doing, and the fewer witnesses he had, the better. However much he could justify the end, he could not justify the means.

As he descended from his car he looked up to survey his son's mill, hulking dark against the cold night sky. It was down. Quite a number of the smaller mills were down. The prices of cloth and cotton were falling, catching nearly everyone with heavy inventories which would

have to be liquidated at a loss. He wondered if Lucian would be able to stand it this time. He had not talked with him since the day of Amy's funeral. Perhaps his mother's money would pull him through. But 1920 looked as if it would be a bad year.

Bridie McCarran, having heard a car drive up, ran into the parlour and peeked through the lace curtains. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! 'Tis Mr. Barnabas himself!"

"By all the saints!" gasped Kitty. "And me with my hair in curl papers!"

"Whish, go hide yourself! I'll pass the time with him while you brush yourself up. But don't be long. He's not a man to be kept waiting."

Bridie cut a far more respectable figure than she had done in the old days. She inherited Kitty's finery, which, if it did not quite fit her, was extremely elegant. As a sign of how she had come up in the world, she consistently wore shoes that pinched her feet, and she would not admit that she polished them so often to get relief from them. One of the marks of a lady, in her opinion, was hurting feet.

When she opened the door Barnabas did not immediately recognize her, for she was wearing a pair of spectacles, an outmoded but satisfyingly ornate green silk frock of Kitty's, a grey woollen shawl (the house was draughty), and the pinching shoes. "Well, now, Mr. Barnabas, 'tis a pleasure indeed to be seeing yourself. And how's Mr. Lucian and all the family? Ain't the weather we've been having something frightful? Enough to try the health and patience of a saint."

"Why, Mrs. McCarran! I thought you were living in Boston with Andrew and Rosie."

"Pray come into the parlour, Mr. Barnabas." She led the way, switching on the glaring overhead light as they passed through the door. "Just make yourself comfortable, sir, and how about a nice hot cup of tea?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. McCarran. I've just finished my dinner. Is Miss McCarran in?"

"Well, yes and no. You might say she is and she ain't. She was resting a bit after supper, a trying day she's had, sir, with the rents and nobody's willing to pay. Saints alive, what that poor girl goes through you wouldn't believe if I was to tell you!"

He smiled. He found Bridie McCarran as lovable as ever, even with the sum of her fantastic pretensions piled upon her. "In that case, perhaps I'd better come back another time." The wave of relief that

swept through him because this might be put off, leaving open the chance that something might happen to prevent it, was astonishing.

"Oh, no, she'd never forgive me was I to let you go unreceived. She'll be out in a whish, soon as she gets tidied up a bit."

He was sitting on a prickly, grey, mohair chair built like a crouching elephant. As he looked around the room he felt a pang of loss, for in it something he had cherished had been wantonly destroyed. He had spent much of his boyhood on this farm.

Bridie noticed his wandering gaze. "Mary's done considerable renovations here, hasn't she?"

"Mary?"

She brushed the murmured word aside. "And quite an improvement it is, sir, if you'll permit me to express my humble opinion."

"Oh, yes, quite an improvement." He shuddered inwardly at the monstrous thing the old room had become. The pine-panelled walls were covered with oatmeal paper. A black marble mantel replaced the old pine shelf where, as a boy, he had stored apples and nuts in a China tea canister. The wide floorboards which had once gleamed under his grandmother's braided rugs were covered with floral carpeting. The old rockers, windsor chairs, marble-topped tables, and the uncomfortable settle with its spoke back had given way to the gigantic chairs and couch, a spindle-legged desk, a library table of walnut veneer, a "fernery", and a magazine rack. He looked above the couch, where a stiff dour painting of his great-aunt Susan had once hung. Now there was a picture on black velvet in a silver frame: a gondola drifting in the moonlight over a rippling Venetian canal. Clearly she would have to be restrained from renovating his house, if she consented to come to live in it.

He said, "Didn't you enjoy yourself in Boston, Mrs. McCarran?"

"'Tisn't only our pleasures we have to think about, sir, but our duties as well. With me girls here and no one to look out for 'em, not a moment's peace I had, nor a decent night's rest. And while we're on the subject, sir, if it's not asking too much, I'd be grateful if you'd persuade 'em to go back to the old mill. Not that I've a blessed thing against Mr. Lucian, for he's the salt of the earth and the most elegant gentleman of me entire acquaintance, but the fact remains he don't look out for me girls in the proper manner, so to speak. Not that I blame the boy, for 'tis no part of a gentleman's business to see personally to every bit and thing. But the girls ain't happy with him, though I'll say in justice to 'em not a word of complainin' has crossed their lips, sir. They've their pride, Mr. Barnabas, same as any of us,



and I beg you not to mention I've took it on meself to go over their heads to you. But if you could see your way to offer 'em their places back in the old mill, sir, in a manner of speaking as if you needed 'em, they'd jump at the chance. 'Twould be like going home, sir, and they'd have no cause to hesitate, seeing their pride would be saved and all."

As always, her madness humbled him. It was so lacking in all pretension that it verged upon the gentle madness of the saints. There was no way, he thought, that the devil could approach Bridie McCarran. True, she had made herself a shadow in the service of ghosts. But when he contemplated his own past he was uncertain that her life was more a desert than his own. "I'll write them in the morning and ask them to come back. But isn't it easier for you to have them working here? Seven miles back and forth is a long way for you to travel every day."

"It's not for me to think about convenience, sir. What's me duty I can do, with the help of the Lord Jesus and His Saints." She crossed herself devoutly.

Kitty came into the room dressed in a black velvet gown and many strands of imitation pearls. As if she were going to the opera, he thought with distaste, yet realizing that she had got herself up like this in honour of his visit. He rose politely, trying to feel charitable: she had so few friends and so few occasions on which to don her finery. "Miss McCarran. I hope I've not disturbed you."

"No, indeed, Mr. Olney. Please sit down. I was only catching a minute's rest. I've had a hard day with the rents. The tales they tell to get out of paying! You wouldn't believe it. Gramma, shouldn't we offer Mr. Olney a cup of tea?"

Gramma nodded, happy and obedient, and trotted off to the kitchen.

"The good times seem to be over, Miss McCarran. With so many mills down, and prices still so high, perhaps they really can't pay."

"Even in good times they always have excuses, Mr. Olney. There ought to be better laws to make them pay or get out. Those who skip their rent don't last a minute in Ireland!"

He did not like her greed. It reminded him of the rapacity of Ezra Pugh. Had this streak of voracity always been in her? Had *greed* led her into that affair with Lucian? If so, he saw little hope for a happy life with her. "You must be very thankful then, in such a crisis, that you don't need the money, Miss McCarran."

"That's beside the point, Mr. Olney. The money being due, it's a matter of principle that it be paid. But I mustn't take up your time

with my affairs when you've come with something else on your mind. Please forgive the rudeness, Mr. Olney."

He could not have suffered more had he been crucified. He stared down at the fuzzy red-and-tan floral pattern of the carpet. "I've come to talk to you about Rafe's future."

"Just think, he'll be seventeen next month! How the time flies, don't it?"

"Miss McCarran, I realize that at my age and in our circumstances, any pretence of sentiment would be in poor taste. It has always troubled me that my grandson should live under a stigma, and that he might be deprived of the financial benefits he is entitled to. Being his mother, you must be even more troubled by it than I am. I wonder, therefore, if you would do me the honour to become my wife?"

Her lips parted, red as bruised cherries. Her blue eyes grew deep, misty with happiness. "You mean, marry *you*, Mr. Olney?" Oh, she could hug herself with gladness, if only he weren't here!

"For Rafe's good. It will mean sacrifices for both of us, which I hope we can make with good grace. Perhaps, if we use each other with charity, we shall be no worse off together than we are apart."

The proposal was unappealingly cold, but, she thought, he was an old man and a Yankee at that. No doubt all these years he'd been in love with her, and now that he could let himself go he did not dare, or he didn't know how. She took her cue from him: it would never do if she behaved in an eager, unladylike manner. She wished that during the idle, lonely years she had paid a little more attention to how people like Barnabas acted, and that she had spent a little more time imitating them. Because deep in her heart she had always known that something like this would happen to her, that there was something special, extraordinary about her which eventually would carry her to the very top. There was destiny in this, the hand of God, that had prevented her from marrying Lucian or Philip, had kept her waiting for Barnabas. Lucian and Philip hadn't been quite good enough to fulfil God's plans for Kitty McCarran. She said demurely, "You do me a great honour, Mr. Olney. But it hardly seems fitting for a—a woman in my position to——"

He looked at her with tormented eyes. "Were you not in this position, Miss McCarran, the situation would never have arisen." That was unkind, but there must be no misunderstanding about the future. "What I propose is a business arrangement. Unless I acknowledge Rafe and adopt him legally, he has no prospect of inheriting anything from me."

"You leave me no choice but to accept, Mr. Olney."

"Thank you, Miss McCarran. Now if you will excuse me——"

"But you can't leave yet! The tea's ready."

He stayed and drank it, to the accompaniment of Gramma's cheerful chatter. Kitty thought that when she moved up on to the Hill, Gramma would be an embarrassing encumbrance. Perhaps they could put her in a nice home, or send her back to Boston, or rent her a tenement opposite the old mill. Really, she ought to be with her own kind.

Barnabas thought that to have Gramma in his house would be a compensation. He watched the vague, sweet smile flit over her worn face, and her rough hands, self-consciously elegant, holding the fragile teacup. With tragic clarity he perceived the truth behind the sad mask of Bridie McCarran, the old mad woman who had nothing to give the world—nothing. Save the balm that was the love of a human creature for all other human creatures.

After he left, Kitty, hugging her secret, helped Gramma clear away the dishes and wash up. Once she interrupted Gramma's chatter to say, "Well, at last he's going to do something for us, and about time, too."

"Och now, and did he tell you that? Imagine it, himself writing a letter to me girls! Oh, 'tis only the grandest sort of gentleman can bother to take account of the pride inherent in the likes of us!"

4

Through the years Rafe had worked out various dodges to get along with other people without being hurt too much. He lived in dread that one of his contrivances might collapse, leaving him exposed and vulnerable; but he managed. Part of the system was to spend as little time as possible at home and never, if he could avoid it, to be caught conspicuously alone. This last was difficult because he really liked to be alone, to think things over. Unselective, skin-deep friendliness for people he didn't quite trust, endless talk, exuberant games, all exasperated him. Yet in these things lay his defence. They were what everyone else did, and he must always, always, be like everyone else. He must admire what they praised, revile what they scoffed at, aim at their goals, mock all values at variance with theirs. It was not easy to impose a conformist maturity upon a nonconformist childhood, but his survival at a fashionable prep school depended upon the excellence

of his conformity. He bought peace, and he was too young to count what it cost him. Because he had peace he concluded that he was happy.

Yet it was an edgy peace, a hollow happiness. He was so vastly different from the others. "My old man," they said. "My dad—Pop——" In the beginning he had let them assume that his father was dead. He had not told the lie in so many words, but he had conveyed it to them somehow. No one had ever *asked* him if he was a Catholic, but he let them assume he was some kind of Protestant. After his first communion he had thrown his rosary and prayer book into a convenient river. His rôle could not have survived these adjuncts of the contemplative life. In his waking hours he did not suffer from this loss; but his dreams often punished him because he had destroyed holy things: he had been nurtured on the fear of hell.

Besides his bastardy and his Catholicism, there were other things to hide. He could not acknowledge Andrew Hawkes, who, by trying to push radical reform laws through the Legislature made himself obnoxious to all right-thinking people. Nor Mr. Rubashevski: no one knew *Jews*, except as comical characters, and there was nothing comical about Mr. Rubashevski. Silence Bess, having won the battle for women's suffrage, had taken up the cudgels for prison reform, and she was often in the papers. Secretly, his gorge rose at the things the editorials said about her. But he could not admit he knew her, for no one else knew undignified, wild women. Above all, he could not admit to Gramma, with her shabby immigrant mill-working origins, her madness, her piety, and her brogue. Indeed, the only person he loved whom he could acknowledge publicly was Barnabas Olney. And he carefully avoided mentioning Barnabas lest some one get the idea there was a connection between them: that perhaps (people did get such odd notions!) Barnabas was his father.

He endured this schizophrenic existence by romanticizing it. He was leading a double life, like the hero in a thriller. At home, where the town rejected him and the rejection hurt, he said, "I'm not what you think I am. The other life is the real me, and you'll never understand what that other life is." At school, listening to the unreal chatter of the boys, letting the smug clichés roll over him, he knew (because of people like Andrew Hawkes and Mr. Rubashevski and Aunt Silence and Gramma) that their dogmas were lies and their bland faith false. Then he said inside himself: "This is not my real life. I know things you don't know because I'm different, and if you knew how different, you'd kick me out. I'm an Impostor!" "Impostor" came from E.

Phillips Oppenheim. When all other defences failed he managed to induce a glow of superiority in himself by being an impostor.

Plainly, he was incurably romantic and incurably individualistic. Although he buried both failings under mountains of deceit, he remained finally, with all pretence stripped away, the boy who had fled from the priest's beating to Mr. Rubashevski and found comfort; the boy who had helped Gramma carry dinners to the mill; who had talked secretly with Alex, King of the Monkeys, and had relished the deeds of the Kings of Old; who had made electricity; and who had killed his first love by cruelty.

The balance between deceit and frankness was precarious. His happiness tottered on a razor's edge. Had there not been so much to explore, so many ideas to examine, he would have known this long before the letter came. It was from his mother, and he received it in the middle of February, 1920, when he was in his last year at prep school.

"Dear Rafe, Mr. Barnabas Olney and I got married this morning. Father Manfred did it in the parish house because Mr. Olney is not of the true faith. Nobody was there but Gramma and your Aunt Silence because Mr. Olney always wants things quiet, and he's an old man and his wife just died only a year ago. We are going to live on Rock Street now in Mr. Olney's house, the farm is too small now we have to have more servants than just Leona. There will be a lot of people will be very much surprised, as I trust you are, too. But I have known Mr. Olney since before you were born so there's not much they can do about it. Mr. Olney is going to adopt you and you are to go to court about it when you come home at Easter. Gramma gets worse and worse. I think she should be in a real nice nursing home because she won't be happy on Rock Street where everybody is so grand and won't speak to her. Mr. Olney says he will write to you and now you should thank God because you are such a lucky boy and your mother's long martyrdom has come to an end."

The news was so unexpected that he did not know immediately how he felt about it. But he must have looked upset for his roommate, Frye, said, "Hey, what's the matter? Bad news?"

Rafe struggled to regain the air of nonchalant sophistication, the easy cynicism, that was the proper temper for that school in those days. "It's my mother. She——" He had already gone too far. Personal revelations were bad taste. The mask of the Impostor was slipping.

"Not ill, I hope?" Frye was from Boston. He was not like everyone

else. He was the Model everyone else aped. He could get by with anything, even with sincerity, should he ever try it.

"Oh, no!" Rafe shrugged, trying to pass it off lightly, the correct manner when life, which did not fight fair, dealt you a blow beneath the belt. "It's really rather funny when you come down to it. She got married."

Frye raised his eyebrows to denote cynical amusement. Unknown to Rafe, Frye also had a model, a maternal uncle who had been an ambassador to the Court of St. James's. "Good. Or isn't it? Naturally I assume she's made a suitable choice, as my dear mother would say, bless her sweet middle-class heart. I know whereof I speak, because we just got over a family ruckus—had to ship my sister to Europe to recover from an unsuitable artist. No end of tears and turmoil."

"Oh, it's nothing like that. She married an old—friend of the family." He did not add that she had married the person he loved and revered above all others, the one set apart from both Rafe's worlds of deceit. Nor that there was something wrong with it, ghastly wrong. Nor that, in every word of his mother's letter, he felt the making of misery.

The clock in the chapel tower struck four. Frye said, "Ouch—hockey practice. We'll be late."

Rafe stuffed the letter into his pocket. The Model and the Impostor grabbed their hockey sticks and ran from the room with uncynical enthusiasm. Rafe would tear the letter up later. He always destroyed Kitty's letters promptly, for his mask could not have withstood the exposure of her semi-literate scrawls.

He was unable to dismiss the guilty sense that he was somehow responsible for the disaster at home. He should be doing something about it. But what? By no rational criterion was he to blame for what his mother and Mr. Olney did. They were "of age": a saying by which his generation shrugged off responsibility for everything done in the world and inadvertently admitted its own helplessness. He felt like Hamlet, an indecisive pawn of tragedy. Obscurely, his was the guilt, and he must expiate it without knowing what it was, as if he fought an unknown beast in the dark. He must confess. But to what? He must warn Mr. Olney. But how? He must do something to smash this unholy alliance before it was too late. On the other hand, he had no right to interfere in other people's lives. After all, they were of age.

He finally went to the headmaster and asked permission to go home for the week-end.

"Why, McCarran? I'm told the hockey game on Saturday is important. Won't the team miss you?"

"Henley's awfully good at centre, sir, so perhaps they won't." Everyone knew Henley was worthless at centre, but it was not in the code to admit this. "You see, sir, my mother's just married an old friend of the family. So I thought perhaps——"

"That's pleasant news. But honestly, McCarran, don't you think they'd rather be alone for a while? Go, by all means, if you feel you must. I can understand your wanting to. But perhaps you should consider their side of it. If you waited a few weeks, it might be more tactful."

"Yes, sir. I hadn't looked at it that way."

He stayed, trying to feel that the decision was the right one, knowing it was not. Tact—what had tact to do with the raw brutality he felt underlay this marriage? What had tact to do with the guilt that lay beneath the threshold of his life? Was tact the weapon to defend Barnabas Olney from the consuming greed of Kitty McCarran?

He did not go home even at Easter. Instead, he went to Boston with Frye. Mr. Olney wrote about the adoption proceedings, suggesting that if it was inconvenient for Rafe to come home, he might give his deposition to any lawyer. Rafe did so, thinking that here might be the opportunity to protest. But the questions only asked what everyone knew, like his age. And did he have any objections to Barnabas Olney as a father? Or any suspicion that Barnabas Olney was not acting in the best interests of and to promote the welfare of Rafael McCarran? Nothing he could do there to change anything.

The headmaster's words made him wish he did not have to go home even when summer came. Rafe flattered himself that he knew quite a lot about sex. All the boys did, except grinds, mama's boys, and other peculiar characters who floated on the fringes of social acceptance. Everybody talked about Women at a gabfest. Never girls, always Women with a capital letter. Pornography circulated. There were places you could go. Women were classified through all gradations from The Ideal, sacred and untalked about; through The Dream, real but unattainable; to Nice, which meant homely, good, and undesirable—people's sisters; to Little Chits, sweet, silly, and yielding, but basically decent; to Broads, lively and low; to Molls, wicked and low; to Ladies, who were professionals; and thence to Drabs, whose title was culled from Shakespeare and who were casual, lively, wicked, professional, and unattainably low. Like The Dream, The Drab was beyond them.

Sex existed. It was part of Life. But although it concerned Rafe, it should not concern his mother and Mr. Olney. They had no *business* lying in the same bed and making love to each other. Merely to think of such a thing was gruesome, obscene. Yet he thought of it a good deal, hating what he thought; and finally, in complete frustration, his emotions lashed out against both of them, and he didn't know which he should rightly defend from the other.

5

The notice of her marriage was in the papers, but no one came to call on Kitty McCarran Olney except the same negligible people who had befriended her for years—the Rubashevskis, Miss Bess, and Andrew Hawkes when he was in town. Andrew's mill-working constituents had faithfully sent him back to Boston every two years, but this year he was planning to run for the State Senate. No one but Silence thought he had a chance of defeating the incumbent, an old-line Republican who had held the office for forty years and whose campaign consisted of clambakes, dignified smiles, and vague promises to cut taxes and repeal the labour laws.

Philip Hawkes and his wife Leah also called. Kitty did not care for Leah, who had developed from a beautiful, quiet girl into a beautiful, quiet woman. As Kitty told Gramma, "She never has a thing to say for herself. And what Philip sees in her I simply cannot imagine." Leah was always reading, and she wrote—little essays that were sometimes printed in *The Atlantic* or *Harper's*, and poetry that made no sense, at least not to Kitty. Even when they were alone together Kitty and Philip behaved toward each other as if they'd never lain together in the same bed, and Kitty had no way of knowing what Philip's memories were of that dead affair. Her own had grown somewhat distorted with the years. She transposed the early fervour of Philip's love to a later time, and she chose to forget that in the end it had been she who had begged Philip for marriage. As she looked back on it now, from the height of being Mrs. Barnabas Olney, it seemed to her that Philip had only married Leah as a second choice, because Kitty had rejected him. And from that point of view she felt a little sorry for Philip, married to a woman who made herself conspicuous by writing—why, she was even writing campaign speeches for Andrew.

Philip and Leah had one child, a strange, Oriental looking little girl with dark red hair. But they didn't bring Miriam when they came to



see Kitty. Afraid she might be contaminated, perhaps, thought Kitty bitterly.

Usually Kitty and Barnabas spent their evenings alone. After a few weeks of strained effort, they ceased to attempt conversation. When Gramma sat with them their load was lightened; but Gramma must have found their company oppressive, for she preferred the servants' in the kitchen. Kitty tried to stop the old woman's fraternization with the lowly, but Gramma persisted. Friends were friends to Gramma, no matter what.

Finally Kitty spoke to Barnabas about it. "Her mind's so far gone she don't understand how humiliating it is. You'd think she'd want to improve herself now, wouldn't you?"

"She's old. And perhaps in her there's no room for improvement."

"I'm sure we can all improve ourselves, Mr. Olney." Kitty never called him "Barnabas." So far, there had been no intimacy between them to warrant such familiarity. "And I can't do a thing with that uppity Mrs. O'Hearn, with Gramma always egging her on. I'll never be able to manage the servants with the two of them always getting their heads together to go against me."

"They're old friends. And if they enjoy a cup of tea together it doesn't harm us."

"But the appearance of it! People will talk!"

"I doubt it. People have many other things to talk about." He excused himself and went into his study, shutting the door.

She found much to resent in Barnabas. He would not let her smarten up the house, although it was so unfashionable that she was ashamed of it. "Suppose some one comes to call?" she asked. "Society people! I'd feel mortal shame. They'd think I was no kind of housekeeper."

He answered, "It's most unlikely we'll be disturbed."

He would not let her put Gramma into a nursing home, and the only time she'd seen him angry was when she brought the suggestion up. He would not let her dismiss the O'Hearns, although they were no earthly use, and O'Hearn especially did nothing to earn his keep, and the two of them acted as if they owned the place. But Barnabas said, "This is their home. We can't ask them to leave just because they're old and have developed a few foibles."

"But they've plenty of money saved! They could buy a little house. I don't see why——"

"Because it would be cruel."

"Cruel!" she laughed. "We all have to take our chances in this world, and they're no exception. If they had a spark of decency they'd be ashamed to take charity, because that's all it is when people don't earn their pay!"

"I'd be pleased if you'd try to get on with them," he said.

All this made her feel that Barnabas found something lacking in her, but when she stood before her mirror she saw no shortcomings. At forty she was more beautiful than she had been at twenty. She was the best-dressed woman in town. She had learned society manners, too, and she'd almost lost her brogue except when she was excited, and she knew how to put store clerks, servants, and millworkers in their places. What more did he want, then?

What she resented most was that he did not even pretend to desire her. When she came to the house after her marriage the maid showed her to her room. She unpacked, taking her time about it, enjoying the sense of power it gave her to keep Barnabas waiting. When she finally went downstairs he had gone to the mill, where he remained for the rest of the day. After wandering lonesomely around the big house during the afternoon, she dressed for dinner, but he might have been blind for all the notice he took of her. He spent the evening teaching Gramma to play cribbage. Kitty brooded before the fire, thinking that he must be shy, or perhaps embarrassed to have taken so beautiful a wife and one twenty years younger than himself.

Finally she said, "It's been a very tiring day. I'm really quite sleepy."

"You'd best go to bed then, dearie," said Gramma, intent upon the new game.

They continued playing, while she hated both of them. At last she stood up, making her skirts rustle. "Well—goodnight, all."

"Goodnight," they murmured. As she went upstairs she heard Barnabas gently correcting a mistake of Gramma's.

She dressed herself in her best new trousseau nightclothes and sat by her own fire, waiting. She heard them come upstairs. Barnabas went to his own room and shut the door. She waited longer, waited until at last it was plain that he was not coming. She got into bed and cried herself to sleep.

After a month of this she confronted him with the accusing question, "What kind of a marriage is this, anyhow?"

"It is a marriage of convenience."

"I could have it annulled, you know."

"Yes. But would that be to your advantage?"

"I'm better looking than the dowdy, high and mighty frumps around here that won't speak to me even!"

"That's true. You're a handsome woman, Kitty."

"Well then. Or perhaps you're so *old* you——"

"Perhaps. But I think more likely it is a—er—a reluctance to make love to my grandson's mother."

"You knew that when you married me, didn't you?"

"Yes. It was the reason I married you. There was no other, believe me. If you find the bargain distasteful you're welcome to an annulment."

She flounced from the room, angry, humiliated, sick with hatred of him and all he stood for.

His armour was unruffled serenity, and nothing she did roused him from the shell of his indifference. She said unkind things to him, but he seemed not to know they were unkind. Once when she was kept in bed with a cold he brought her flowers, had the doctor call, and stopped by her room to ask if there was anything he could do for her. She told him to get out and stay out. He obeyed. Finally she decided the best way to make him squirm was to gouge money from him. She bought things recklessly, but he paid the bills without comment. She demanded a bigger housekeeping allowance, and he gave it to her. She demanded a bigger personal allowance, and he gave her that. The money accumulated swiftly in her bank account, but if he knew this he gave no sign of it.

One evening she showed him an ermine cape she'd bought.

"It's very becoming," he said, "But——"

"But what? I suppose you're thinking now I'm extravagant."

"No. I was wondering where you'd wear it."

"Really! Do you realize that cost *twenty-five hundred* dollars?"

"Did it?" he said indifferently.

"Don't you *care*?"

"No. Should I?"

"It's certainly a lot of money!"

"It doesn't seem too much for such a handsome fur, but if you think you were cheated, perhaps the store will take it back."

"Of course I wasn't cheated! It's a bargain, or I wouldn't have bought it."

"Then if you're happy with it——"

"Oh! Don't you realize most men would be wild if their wives bought a thing like that without even asking first?" Angrily she threw the cape on to the sofa. "But you—you act as if it was nothing—just nothing! Don't you ever think about money?"

He laughed. "Now you mention it, I don't suppose I do. Except in connection with the mill."

"If I got you into debt you'd think of it fast enough."

"But that's very unlikely, isn't it?"

"Sure I don't know. Depends on how much you've got." Her eyes narrowed. "And that I've never heard you mention, come to think of it."

He rose to go into his study.

"Well, how much have you got?" she screamed.

"I don't really know."

"Sure you know! Everybody knows how much money he has. If you're such a millionaire you don't care what fur coats cost——"

"Excuse me, Kitty. I don't want to be tactless, but isn't all this talk about money a little vulgar?"

Her lips parted in surprise, and a slow, angry flush reddened her face. This was a new point of view. Money vulgar! But of course he hadn't said money was vulgar, only the talk of it. She was careful thereafter not to mention it. She continued to accumulate it, however, with avidity.

6

In June Rafe came home to this house where the only happy person was Gramma. The first thing his mother said to him was, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, how grown-up you are, Rafe! You can beau me around now, can't you?"

He laughed and kissed her. "You're too young and beautiful for the likes of me, Mother. Besides, I expect I'll be working at the mill full time now."

Kitty pouted. "You don't have to work, Rafe. You can afford to be a gentleman if you want."

"All the time? Do nothing but be gentlemanly? What a career, Mother!"

The next day he went to the mill with Barnabas. Although they spent most of the morning talking in Barnabas's office, trying to recapture the comradeship of old times, they felt constraint. The thought of Kitty stood between them, censoring their friendship.

"Do you have any plans, Rafe? About your future?"

"I thought I'd like to come to work in the mill with you, if you'll have me."

"Wouldn't you like to go to Harvard?"

"Well, of course Frye's going. He was my room mate last year, and he's absolutely tops. And a lot of the other boys—but—— Well, sir, they're all going to be lawyers or doctors or things like that. I always thought I wanted to work with you, and, of course, in a mill—— Well, business isn't exactly the sort of thing you learn in college, is it?"

"Perhaps you should study economics. We could use a little business theory. I'd like to know how the whole thing works—if it really does. But are you sure you really like mills? You mustn't confuse affection for me, or even admiration——" Barnabas smiled wryly—"with true interest in the work."

"But what else is there here except mills? And it's a good business. People always have to have cloth."

Barnabas fidgeted, playing with a ruler, scribbling idly on a pad of paper. Rafe did not notice this unusual display of nerves, for he was accustomed to jittery young people. "They don't have to have *our* cloth. This is a cut-throat business. It is hard to work in it and retain any ethics. Half the time we make big profits, the other half we close down or operate at a loss. We buy cotton and sell cloth on the commodity exchange, and the market fluctuates in big swings. More and more our prosperity seems to depend upon unusual conditions: war, strikes in the English mills, starvation in some European country that drives cheap labour to America. If we do not have high tariffs against English and Japanese goods we cannot operate. If the law forces us to shorten hours or hire fewer women and children, a certain number of our marginal mills go under. If immigration falls off, and the labour market grows tight, forcing us to raise wages, more mills close. Do you think that sounds like a healthy business?"

"I don't know, sir. But it's a tremendous challenge, isn't it?" At school it was fashionable to talk of everything in terms of Challenge: history was the challenge of the frontier, of war, of discovery, of exploration, of expansion, of progress. A game was a challenge. An enticing female was a challenge. A man chose a career because it was a challenge.

"It's a bitter fight for survival, and if you want to call that a challenge, I suppose it is. I've come to think that it's a losing battle, but I don't mention this to anyone in the Cotton Manufacturers' Association. They prefer to look on the bright side. They'll all go down grinning. Perhaps our epitaphs will all read: Here lies one who died of optimism." He smiled. "I'm afraid I've lost the spirit of adventure. At present we're operating at a loss. Would you like to spend a while

looking around to see if you can find ways to cut costs so that we shan't have to go down this summer?"

"Oh, yes, sir! That would be—er—a tremendous challenge!" Only Rafe's naïve enthusiasm prevented him from sounding priggish.

Barnabas felt a tinge of sadness. It would be pleasant to recapture the temper which made a man regard the duty to make money as an adventure. Then he remembered that it was unkind to give this boy, so full of zest and inexperience, a hopeless task. "Rafe, you probably won't succeed. Don't be too disappointed. Even if you fail there will be by-products: you'll get to know the plant and some of our problems. Then if you do decide to go to Harvard you'll have some idea of what our needs are."

"Shall I start now, sir?"

Barnabas looked at his immaculate clothes. "No. Go get yourself some jeans. Probably the best plan would be for you to work a week or so in each department, starting with carding and combing. Naturally, all the help will know you're part of management and they'll resent you. Our help isn't what it was in the old days. They seem to have a chip on their shoulders, as if they thought we were their enemies—curious sort of class-consciousness that doesn't seem very American. So don't go into the mill without a wrench in case you have to protect yourself. You can report every night on what you've learned. That be all right?"

Barnabas's warning about the workers had been an understatement. When Rafe walked into the carding room to work, the men confronted him with cold enmity which was difficult for one so young to ignore. Any attempts he made at conversation died stillborn. They pretended he interfered with their work. They muttered about him in Portuguese or French. He decided that they regarded him as a bastard interloper, not only to the mill but to the whole of society. He went about his work doggedly, hating the silence and enmity, angrily trying to master and understand the machines which the foremen grudgingly explained to him.

As he went from department to department, encountering always the same sullen animosity among the men and disagreeable coy servility among the women, he felt that here was a whole mill full of people who hated their work and who did it, even without the goad of his presence, because the alternative was starvation. Rafe had neither the maturity nor the philosophical perception to understand that it was not specifically as "boss" that they hated him. They all intended to become bosses of something some day, for this was America, the land of the

gold-paved streets. They hated him as the symbol of a dark necessity, as the owner of the machines to which they surrendered their humanity. He could not understand what it meant to face starvation in a strange land, nor what it did to a man to work day after day in the wet heat and hideous noise of the mills while he dreamed of the clear air of the Azores or of the silence of the bare old Laurentian hills.

Rafe complained to Barnabas, "They're brutes, sir! They don't take an interest in the job, and they don't care if they misuse the machinery. We can't ever economize if we don't get a higher-type worker, people with some intelligence."

"That they don't speak English doesn't mean they're stupid, Rafe. And we can't get what you call a higher type because we can't afford to pay decent wages."

"But such brutes, sir! Why, today one of the weavers grabbed a doffer woman and banged her head against a loom until——"

"I know. I discharged him. Try to be charitable, Rafe. We don't know his values or his needs, what goaded him to do it. Try to understand. Think what it might be like to be one of them."

"But that's impossible, sir! I couldn't be one of them—nothing would make me want to beat a woman to death!" He said that, he who but for a quirk of Barnabas's conscience might have lived a foundling and sought worse ways to spend his time than weaving in a mill.

"None of us knows what, but for the Grace of God, he might have been."

Rafe flushed. "I'm sorry, sir. But they're so—Oh, they hate me! They act as if they know I'm a bastard!"

For the first time the word lay spoken, naked between them. "Yes," said Barnabas quietly. "They probably know it. Possibly they do not envy your lot any more than you envy theirs."

Rafe longed to ask, Are you my father? *Are* you? And he could not ask, for whatever the answer he feared its honesty and the consequences that certain knowledge would bring.

As if Barnabas sensed the unspoken question and also feared it, he asked, "Have you found any way we can cut costs?"

Relieved, Rafe answered in a rush of enthusiasm. "I went to see Mr. Philip Hawkes, and he's absolutely tops—nothing he doesn't know about machinery. There's a new spinner we could put in. He says he could lay off about half our spinning girls and increase production at the same time. I have the literature up in my room, sir, if you——"

"Yes, but—— We're taxed on the basis of our machinery. So long as we keep the old equipment our taxes are fairly steady, except for

occasional rate increases. If we put in new machines our taxes per spindle may double. They could be higher even if we reduce the number of spindles. We'll have to look into it."

"But the old machines aren't as efficient!"

"Why don't you go down to the City Hall tomorrow to see what the new rate would be if we put them in?"

"Yes, sir. Isn't that a stupid way to tax a business? It's putting a premium on inefficiency, isn't it?"

"Yes. But some one must be taxed, and there's no real money here except in the mills. We can be thankful it's an election year. Perhaps with a sound business administration we can get rid of this grotesque income tax."

"Frye thinks that's a very socialistic thing, sir."

"I don't know much about socialism. If we have to go down, would you like to spend the rest of the summer at Westport Harbor?"

"Oh, but surely we won't have to, sir!"

"I don't know. Prices are falling so fast we can sell our cloth only at a serious loss."

"Maybe the market will pick up." Rafe liked to talk of markets, cotton prices, and other things he didn't understand.

"I doubt it."

"But times have been so good! They can't just go bad overnight."

"They always do. The one certainty in business is that bad times follow good times."

"Does that mean we'll have to curtail our living expenses, sir?"

Barnabas laughed. "No. But in justice to our stockholders I can't continue to operate at a loss. We shan't suffer though."

"How can we fail to if our income is cut off?"

"You sound just a little pompous, Rafe," said Barnabas gently. "We aren't entirely dependent on the mill. I've been lucky on the Exchange. I sold cotton short some months ago."

"I won't worry about it then," said Rafe, although he had no idea what it meant to sell cotton short.

"No. Don't you worry about it." Barnabas could scarcely refrain from smiling. He thought that, after all, despite its obvious advantages, there was much about youth that was painful.

Two weeks later he closed the mill and took his family to Westport Harbor—except for Gramma, who refused to abandon her ghosts for anything so irresponsible as a holiday.

Andrew and Rosie returned to Fall River for Andrew's campaign. He had no real hope of winning, for 1920 looked like a Republican



year. Silence stumped heroically for him, organizing what Ezra Pugh contemptuously called the female vote. He forbade his wife and daughter to demean themselves by casting a ballot, although Adelaide was in no condition to do so anyway, for she was suffering from what Grace euphemistically called a nervous breakdown. He sputtered to his friends that Silence had made a deal with Andrew to support his campaign if he'd introduce a prison reform Bill in the Legislature, and that would mean thieves and murderers and worse would be turned loose so that a decent woman would never again dare to set foot on the streets. A canary and a feather bed in every cell, that's what the fool female wanted. It was high time somebody did something about radicals, crackpots, lunatics, and Wobblies. They should be jailed and deported, and no nonsense about trials.

But Pugh only talked to people who agreed with him and would vote against Andrew anyhow. By November the workers were living off the soup kitchens, and the amount of back rent they owed to people like Ezra Pugh and Kitty McCarran was appalling. They elected Andrew by a comfortable majority.

All was not dust and ashes, however, for the handsome Mr. Harding and the dour Mr. Coolidge were also elected. A new era began, one of which Ezra heartily disapproved, as he had disapproved of every era that had preceded it. The wild lush twenties broke in a glittering wave over his bald pate, sending icy shudders down his spine. Of course Ezra never read a book. Consequently there was much in this era that escaped him, such as the probing of Freud, the iconoclasm of Bertrand Russell, and the insults of Shaw: which was just as well. What bothered him unduly was that Grace discarded her corsets and bought girdles, bobbed her hair, and joined a class in the modern dance to trim her figure down. And that Adelaide wandered around the house twisting her hands together as if she were washing them: that is, she did when she wasn't locked in her room drinking. Very disturbing, Adelaide drinking like that. He supposed it must be "change of life"—took different women different ways. She'd get over it—have to. The Pughs had never been addicted to any sort of vice.

That new stuff called rayon also bothered him, though he was convinced it couldn't last. And it was most annoying that women were now cutting their immodest dresses from three yards of cloth, and not even a mill woman would be caught dead in a cotton fabric.

He took what comfort he could in the thought that this state of affairs was temporary. He had only to wait until people got tired of rayon and women used twenty yards of cotton again in a petticoat.

While he waited he enjoyed the sound business administration with which the country was now blessed, and the low taxes and high tariffs it brought him. And he fumed over the gall of Barnabas Olney, who was going to send that bastard of his to Harvard, where he'd mingle with and contaminate the sons of decent people. Why, Ezra Pugh himself hadn't gone to Harvard!

## PART EIGHT

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### Old Love

Kitty hated Westport Harbor. The house was full of ghosts of the young Kitty and the young Lucian, ghosts of passion and remorse, ghosts of hope. She was much alone, for Rafe and Barnabas were always off fishing or sailing, and Gramma was in Fall River. She wandered around the rooms furnished with the sad remnants of other times, looking at the bed where she and Lucian had lain, finding the kettle they had used to boil water for their coffee, the axe with which Lucian had chopped firewood, the old bearskin rug, now moth-eaten, on which she had lain before the fire in the boarded-up parlour while Lucian had caressed and admired her. Or she spent hours sitting on the veranda dressed in fine voile and muslin frocks, crocheting. The people who passed averted their faces from her.

Often she saw Adelaide's nurse wheeling the poor wreck around in an invalid's chair. Lucian's wife. Well, even in her best days she'd been no prize. Kitty didn't know what was wrong with the woman. "Nervous breakdown," "change of life," and "she drank secretly." Kitty heard all the rumours. Just before Kitty had come to Westport Harbor, Adelaide had tried to kill herself, broken away from her guardians and gone down to the sea to drown, leaving an incoherent scribbled note for Lucian. But she had chosen a time when the tide was out, and she had succeeded only in falling on the rocks and breaking her leg. She was no longer the plump vacant-faced matron Kitty had met in Rubashevski's store. Adelaide was now thin and yellow. Her face was wrinkled, afflicted with a nervous tic that every few minutes twisted her mouth into a grotesque smile. If anyone spoke to her—anyone at all—terror leaped into her eyes, and she looked like an animal trying to escape a trap. As accompaniment to this naked fright, she giggled.

Watching this broken woman being wheeled about the town, Kitty thought that now, if anyone wanted to bother, Lucian Olney could probably be had for the taking.

Bored with her existence, Kitty bought herself a smart bathing suit and took her crocheting down to the beach, where the people played around her, shouting, ignoring her. But Lucian noticed her. She often caught him staring at her, looking as if he wanted to speak, and she recognized that he was as bored as she. Lest she meet him in the street on her way to church or market, she spent hours grooming and dressing herself. When people turned to look at her, she was satisfied, whatever the later comment might be. In that place she was as tantalizing and unwelcome as Venus in a Calvinistic meeting house.

Finally, one day when Rafe and Barnabas were sailing, Lucian called. He ran up the veranda steps with easy nonchalance, although he was now a little fat. His hair had grown vague in colour, and it receded from his temples. The bones of his face were now masked by lax, middle-aged plumpness. Fortunately his tailor still managed to hide the paunchiness of his middle.

"Do you mind my coming, Kitty? I can't stand it any longer, seeing you every day and not——"

"Your father's out. He won't be back till after dark."

"I saw them go. Chummy, aren't they? My son and my father." He laughed. "I could use a whisky and soda."

"We have no liquor. Mr. Olney won't keep it, except for medicine, since it's against the law. I can give you tea—or lemonade."

"No thanks. So you call him 'Mr. Olney.' Doesn't sound terribly intimate."

She bent her head to count the stitches in her lace. The silence lasted uncomfortably long.

Then Lucian burst out. "We've been awful fools, Kitty."

"I didn't make the bed we lie in."

"You've lost your brogue. Kitty, can't you understand what this is doing to me? Seeing you every day, more beautiful than ever—it's driving me crazy."

"I'm not here because I like it. And I can't leave. But perhaps you can."

"You know I can't. Not with Adelaide in her condition. None of it was our fault, Kitty. We were caught in the whole filthy net of bourgeois morals. But do we have to waste the rest of our lives being the victims of puritan taboos?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do. What kind of life do you think I have with Adelaide? You've seen her, haven't you?"

She shrugged. He saw the fine modelling of her shoulders beneath the thin muslin of her dress. "It's the life you chose."

"No. It's the life that was forced on me. I've never really loved any woman but you." Perhaps, being bored, he believed it. "I never shall."

She stopped crocheting and stared out across the lawn at the street. The clematis vine cast mottled shadows over her face. She looked scarcely a day older than when he had first seen her.

"It isn't too late to start over, Kitty."

She turned toward him, not seeing him as he was that day, but as he had been twenty years before. "What about your wife? And Mr. Olney?"

"We can't be brutally unkind to them, but—let's face facts. My father is not young, and knowing his peculiar sense of honour, it's easy to see why he married you. It's not much of a marriage, is it?"

She did not answer.

"Frankly, I find it rather horrible to think about, Kitty. An old man like that and you—the mother of his grandson. Not many things impress me as obscene, but that——"

Her face flushed scarlet. No matter what came of this, she would never confess that Barnabas Olney ignored her.

"All right. I won't talk about it. But it must be hell for you. Of course, I know you did it for the boy. But——"

She smiled. She had done it for Rafe, hadn't she? Well, *hadn't* she?

"My father's not looking well, Kitty. And Adelaide will never be any better. She's not violent—not yet, anyhow. But—do you think it's any sort of life for me? Chained to a gibbering——"

"She's your wife all the same."

"Why does it hurt an old man, who certainly doesn't love you, and poor Adelaide, if we try to find some happiness before it's too late?"

"It's a sin. It's just as much a sin as it ever was." But she said it without the old conviction.

"No. It's a sin to let others wreck your life, to waste love and happiness. It's a sin to deny everything that's beautiful and noble. What use is life if you don't live it?"

She looked at him, not seeing that his face was flaccid and a little crass. To her there was nothing sordid nor unreal in this fine moment when fleetingly she recaptured her youth. Lucian strode toward her.

"No, Lucian. Please don't touch me. I—would you mind leaving me alone? I have to think. I can't——" Her voice trailed away sadly.

It was a speech right out of all the plays they'd seen, but to them it rang true, convincing them that neither of them had changed much in all those barren years.

"I'll be back," he promised softly. And, with an ironic smile: "Having waited this long, I can wait a little longer."

She watched him out of sight. It was all excellent acting, no less exciting because the denouement was now a foregone conclusion.

That night at dinner she said to Barnabas, "Your son Lucian called today?"

"Oh? Did he say what he wanted?"

"No. But he said he'd be back."

"Um." Barnabas wondered if he'd gone through his mother's money already.

The plans did not work out, however, for on the following morning, while Barnabas and Rafe were readying the boat for a sail, Barnabas had a heart attack. The local doctor eased him with morphine, but he told Kitty that Barnabas must be taken to Fall River, to the hospital, immediately. Now that it suited her to stay in Westport Harbor she must leave, and no doubt when Lucian returned to Fall River the spell would be broken. The fault was Barnabas's—stupid, sick old man. Wouldn't you think, if he had to have a heart attack, that he could have one that would kill him?

2

When Rafe saw Barnabas twisted in the agony of his attack he thought he was dying, and he knew, with a rare flood of emotional conviction, that he loved Barnabas. The knowledge came from beyond his senses, piercing the blindness of habit, shattering the barriers of the ego. It made Rafe know that what he felt for Barnabas was not affection, nor the habit of dependence, nor admiration, nor gratitude, nor the easy liking of a congenial friend. It was a fierce possessive emotion, active, aggressive, agonizing in its persistence. Rafe knew: "I'm all he has. Everything's up to me. I must protect him from everything, even from *her*. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be alive." That was somewhat like saying, "I'm me because he is Barnabas." Which of course was nonsense, put so badly. Yet there was a mystical meaning beyond these thoughts toward which Rafe strode with immature longing: the hidden answer to the eternal questions, "What am I? And why am I myself?" Since all this was too much for Rafe to grapple with, he concluded that Barnabas must in truth be his father, and that what

he felt must be the proper love of a son for his father, of flesh knowing its own. Into his love he therefore poured all the longing of his fatherless years, lavishing upon Barnabas such care and tenderness as perhaps no son before him had bestowed upon a father.

He loved Barnabas so much that he was able to fogive him the crime which until then Rafe had held unforgivable: the crime of begetting Rafe, the bastard, upon the body of a woman whom in his inmost heart, Rafe feared.

He refused to leave Barnabas's bedside, much to the annoyance of Kitty and the hospital attendants. As he sat through the long still nights, listening to the sick man's quiet, sleeping breath, he thought fiercely, "I must never let him die, not ever." But Barnabas was sixty-five, and Rafe not yet twenty. It was a love condemned to overtones of sorrow.

When Barnabas came home from the hospital Rafe still refused to leave him. He spent his waking hours in Barnabas's room, reading aloud anything Barnabas wanted to hear, from the financial pages to Emerson's *Essays*. They played chess. They talked, Barnabas telling Rafe stories of his youth, of the mill, and sometimes only of thoughts he had; Rafe telling Barnabas about school, his friends there, and the problem of reconciling what he'd learned with theology. Gramma brought them pots of tea, plates of cakes, and stopped to chat with them while they ate. Kitty came in dutifully twice a day to inquire how Barnabas was, and if there was anything she could do for him. She left constraint behind her, a rift of painful silence in the peace.

This interlude lasted only a month, but during that time Rafe matured greatly. In later years he looked back upon it as the time when he'd grown up.

There was one disagreement between them. Barnabas wanted Rafe to go to Harvard. Rafe wanted to stay home to protect Barnabas. They compromised. Rafe would delay his going until February, and Barnabas would never lift anything, never exert himself, sleep eight hours every night, never forget his medicine, eat sensibly, and never worry about anything.

"You ought to stop gambling, too," said Rafe.

"Gambling?"

"All that cotton speculating. It's too exciting. You can't help worrying when you're gambling."

"But it's my business to buy and sell cotton. There are times when it's the only thing that keeps the mill in the black."

"It will just have to go in the red, then. Of course you have to buy

cotton if you're going to manufacture it, but you don't have to keep selling it short and buying it for resale and all that. Why," said Rafe with insufferable virtue, "it's no better than shooting craps."

"I've always been very successful at it," said Barnabas humbly. "And if I stop now, with the mill down, how can we pay any dividends?" He did not tell Rafe that all mill stock, including his own, was greatly depressed, and that he had been buying Olney stock as it came on to the market.

"If you kill yourself worrying, there'll be no dividends anyhow."

"Don't you think I might worry as much about not being able to pay the bills and the taxes as about my gambling ventures?"

Rafe was temporarily stumped. But after an hour of brooding over his chess pieces (Barnabas winning handily), he came up with a solution. "Look, sir. We don't have to live on this scale. We can cut down, move back to the farm. Sell this place, and——"

"You'd be willing to live like that again?"

"Why, of course. I'd live in a tent—any place—if only it would make you stop worrying and get well."

"I'm not worrying, Rafe. Perhaps even without gambling we can manage to struggle along and still live here. Now suppose you stop worrying, so I won't have to worry about you worrying."

They laughed and resumed their game in good spirits. All in all, though, during that fall and winter, Rafe was too busy protecting Barnabas to notice that his mother had taken a lover.

### 3

Rafe expected Harvard to be like his preparatory school. It wasn't. He expected to pick up his old friends and go on from where they had all left off, and he couldn't. As he wrote Barnabas: "I looked up old Frye the other day and he's got hold of a new crowd, none of them boys from our school. He seemed glad to see me, though, and suggested we have dinner together some time. He's not living near the Yard but with his family in Boston, and he's going in for law, so we probably shall not meet often in class. Of course Frye's always awfully courteous, but I got the impression he rather looks down on people in business."

Actually old Frye was cool with the detached cruelty possible only to the "awfully courteous". He made it plain that it was naïve of Rafe to expect to pick up old school friendships at Harvard. He introduced



Rafe to his new friends, urbane, sophisticated youths, as "a chap from Fall River". One of them raised an eyebrow and asked, "Mills, no doubt?" In much the same tone he might have asked, "Garbage collector, no doubt?" They allowed Rafe to sit on the fringes of their company while they talked of things and people he knew nothing about. Then they all piled into a long red Isotta sports car to go into Boston to take in the last show at the Old Howard. As an afterthought, Frye asked Rafe to come with them; but Rafe, not being devoid of dignity, had refused, saying without rancour, "I have to study for an economics' quiz tomorrow."

"Grind, eh?" laughed Frye. Then, casually, "Well, nice to have seen you. We must get together for dinner some time."

In his innocence of the world's way, Rafe concluded that Frye had somehow discovered his illegitimacy. Rafe had so long conditioned himself to believe this to be his own private and special crime against humanity that he did not greatly blame Frye for his conduct, much as it hurt. If you were a bastard, Rafe thought dully, you got used to that sort of thing. He did hope, though, forlornly, that Frye wouldn't spread it around. Of course a fellow could always keep to himself, just in case. Rafe squared his shoulders and held his head high as he walked through the Yard to his dormitory. Anyway, he was here to study, not to waste his time and Barnabas's money at the Old Howard.

No, Rafe did not blame Frye for refusing to lead a bastard into his circle, though to many people it might have seemed a poor excuse for abandoning a friendship. Had Rafe known the truth, or had he the wisdom to perceive it, he might have felt differently about Frye's cruelty. For the truth was that Frye had not been born into one of the families which spoke only to God, and his consuming ambition was to achieve by indirection what he had been denied by nature. In Frye's view one did not realize such an ambition by wasting time cultivating mill duffers from Fall River. Rafe had suffered his first brush with a snob; but because he did not recognize it for what it was, it changed his life. Because it changed his life, it changed his viewpoint about his life. And finally it changed his values.

As a child and youth, Rafe's great desire had been to be like all other children, all other youths. He had fought and hidden his illegitimacy, his Catholicism, his Irish mother, in pursuance of conformity. He had lied and pretended. He had done things he didn't like doing because everyone else did them. He had befriended people he did not like and at their behest attacked others who were helpless or weak; he had sworn allegiance to gods he did not revere; given lip service to codes

that he thought silly; and pretended to want what he did not want. Thus, in pursuit of conformity, he had tried to make himself a cardboard prig. Until now he had thought that, had he succeeded, the price he paid would not have been too high—not for the bliss of universal, unquestioning acceptance. There was nothing on earth so awful, so *lonely*, as being different. There was no burden so terrible as individuality.

Now Frye, who had been his best friend, had shown him that all striving was useless. For some reason the glorious, lotus-eating comfort of sheeplike existence was never going to be Rafe's. He clenched his fists and beat them against his desk. "Damn him, damn him, damn him!"

He flung himself into books, like countless others before him who had sought relief and escape from the burdens of freedom, individuality, and loneliness. The results were gratifying. Not only did he rise close to the top of his class, but he came to like the books. He began to study for the sake of learning. Slowly he began to think, to enjoy thinking, and to value thought. He learned the virtue of scepticism and its extreme difficulty. He learned to revere the inescapable fact. He learned the joy of creating an idea nobody had before created, and the pain of discovering that, after all, somebody had thought of it already.

Of course he was a grind, and as such worthy of Frye's easy contempt. He made friends of other grinds. Instead of going to the Old Howard they sat in one or another smoke-filled dormitory room arguing over the problems of the world, flinging great names at each other, diving into the murky waters of philosophy after first causes, questioning all assumptions, clutching at each new work of Tawney, Freud, Laski, Shaw, as it rolled from the press.

Nine-tenths of the time he was drunk with the headiest of all wines, the freedom of unrestrained thought. He felt wholly alive for the first time in his life, except for that one brief moment when he'd had the revelation of his love for Barnabas. His energy was prodigious. He consumed more reading matter in a year than Barnabas had got through in a lifetime. He felt as if an unbearable weight had been lifted from his soul, as indeed it had: because, for the first time, he knew that these grand friends of his did not care about his illegitimacy, nor about his Catholicism, nor about his harlot Irish mother. He could have shouted at them, "Look, fellows, I'm a bastard!" And they'd have shrugged and said, "So what?" Of course he didn't: there are some secrets one doesn't shout abroad. But it was sweet to know that one could shout if one wanted to and not be kicked into the cold.

In the beginning, when he was unhappy, he went home every weekend to find comfort in Barnabas, in giving him the service no one else wanted or needed from Rafe. Later, as Barnabas's health improved and Rafe made friends and became absorbed in his work, he wrote Barnabas excuses: a new Shaw play he must see, or the Russian ballet; the symphony was playing a new musical work; he was going up to Marblehead to visit a friend ("His father's an artist!"), or up to New Hampshire to ski.

Barnabas wrote: "I shall miss not seeing you, but you must never conclude from this statement of fact that I want you to come here when you find something more immediately fruitful to do. All that you write about your friends and your studies gives me the greatest satisfaction, not only because it vindicates my faith in you but because it demonstrates better than anything else that you are making a happy adjustment at Harvard. I can understand the difficulties of your life only imperfectly. Another man's troubles must always be incomprehensible to us, unless, by some miracle, they happen to duplicate our own. Since you were a small boy I have often thought of your peculiar difficulties and tried to understand them, even trying to imagine how I might have felt about them and acted toward them if they had been my own. And I have always doubted that I should have done as well with them as you have done. I am very proud of you."

For years Rafe treasured this letter, as another might have hoarded his first love letter.

On another occasion, late in the spring, Barnabas wrote Rafe: "I ran into distressing difficulties at the stockholders' meeting. The misery among the workers, who have now been without wages for almost a year, is indescribable. I therefore suggested that we open our mill for a few days each week. The loss to us would be moderate, and might even be overcome entirely by judicious trading in cotton, gambling as you call it. But the relief it would afford our people would be nearly incalculable. I now own sixty-five per cent of the stock in our mill, and I could therefore be high-handed and over-ride the minority, except that the consequences would be too unpleasant to face. The others stood in a block against me, and I fear they would not hesitate to bring a minority report of their dissatisfaction with me into the courts. With the mill down, they are receiving no dividends in any case, and their losses could well be less than they now suffer in the workers' unpaid bills and in the general depression of business—not to mention the fitful charity they dispense when they feel the pinch of conscience.

"None of my arguments convinced them, however, and appeals to their humanity seemed to irritate them beyond measure. Mr. Pugh, who owns about three per cent of our stock, spoke for the minority and delivered me a lecture on economics, the like of which I hope you do not hear at Harvard. Humanity, he told me, has no place in business, and the misery of the people, although undeniable, is really a good thing. It teaches them to be grateful to Charity, in which all of us must indulge for the good of our souls, and it makes them less greedy in their demands for short hours and high pay and other types of pampering. It is Mr. Pugh's hope that the bad times will last long enough to create a large surplus of labour, to depress weavers' wages to five dollars a week, to increase hours to seventy-two a week, and to break the unions. Only so, he maintains, can we return to the good prosperous days when a man gave an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. I have no answer to this argument, for plainly we are not holding our own against the South, where many mills are in full production. Yet I have come to feel as I grow older, and perhaps doddering, that prosperity cannot be built for long upon such starvation and misery as I now see in our streets and tenements. If you learn the answer to this in your studies, I hope you will tell me what it is.

"I have no will to battle with these men, however, and therefore I have decided to buy up all the outstanding stock. I estimate this will take all my available resources, and will mean the liquidation of all the other stock I own and perhaps also the sale of most of my property. The situation among our help is so desperate that I cannot delay merely to wait for bargains in the stock. I do not write all this to ask you advice, for I do not feel you are necessarily mature enough to give it; and also I must act according to my conscience and my convictions, regardless of your opinions. I write to unburden my troubles, perhaps, and in the hope that if some day disaster strikes us because of the course I am now pursuing, you will find excuses for me. I fear I am not acting wisely. But I have reached the point where I am ashamed to walk the streets of this town lest by accident I stumble on my own guilt."

Rafe did not know what Barnabas meant by that last sentence, and so limited was his knowledge of Barnabas's affairs that he suggested he leave school to save his tuition and expenses for the stock fund.

Ezra Pugh refused to sell his stock, for it was his nature always to refuse to give another man what he thought the other wanted, even if Pugh had no use for it himself. Two other small investors could not be found. Others drove hard bargains for their shares. By the time Rafe came home for the summer, however, Barnabas owned

ninety-six per cent of his stock, although he owned nothing else except the house on Rock Street, the farm given in trust to Kitty, and the house in Westport Harbor.

He and Rafe opened the mill in June, operating it for three days a week at an average loss of fifteen per cent. Barnabas covered some of the loss by speculation, and some of it by short-term loans. He and Rafe went to see Philip Hawkes to discuss the possibility of converting one of the sheds to weave that new fibre, rayon; but the cost of the venture would have been so great that Barnabas could not have handled it without giving up his stock again. And the city taxes on the new machinery would have raised operation costs so much that Philip Hawkes doubted the profit margin would be high enough to warrant the risk.

"The only sensible way to do such a thing, Mr. Olney, would be to buy a mill somewhere else, in New Jersey or down South. It's my opinion you'd be throwing good money after bad to sink more in New England mills."

"You think we're finished forever here?" asked Barnabas, feeling half-sad, half-angry, that anyone should think New England finished.

"In textiles, yes. You have exorbitant power costs and exorbitant taxes. Your wages are about ten per cent higher than in the South, which is still not enough to permit your workers to buy much of the cloth they weave. But perhaps the important thing is that your wages are twice as high as in the English mills, and several hundred times higher than in Japan. I don't want to seem to meddle in your business, but have you had a cost accountant go over your mill recently?"

"I never have. What could he tell me my own book-keepers can't tell?"

"Perhaps a good deal. I know a case in Lowell where they were able to find enough waste to put a marginal mill in the black again. If you've any narrow looms, for instance——"

"Not in operation. I have about twelve hundred twenty-eights in Number 3 Mill. Perhaps you remember them. We had to use them during the war for shirtings."

"I can sell them for you in Japan, if you like. I might get a quarter of what you paid for them."

"Good. Come and look at them tomorrow, if it's convenient. So the Japanese can make a profit on twenty-eight-inch goods, eh?"

"They can make a profit on anything. Very clever, the Japanese. A high type of industrial feudalism," said Philip drily. "I understand their weavers sleep on the floor between the looms."

Barnabas turned cost accountants loose in the mill. He followed their advice scrupulously. He rearranged his equipment to cut out waste motion. He installed freight elevators. He disposed of most of his outmoded machinery to Philip. He ended producing nothing but fine nainsook, huck towelling, and diaper cloth, for which there were still steady, high-priced markets. Within a year he was operating full time again at a modest but reliable profit.

By 1923 business in general had greatly improved. As the world embarked upon the big boom it ceased to seem remarkable to anyone that Barnabas, by doing a lot of fool new-fangled things, had managed to keep his mills going when no one else could.

The world outside Harvard and Rafe's economic books rolled on like a glittering golden bubble. The stock market rose to dizzy and dizzier heights, and people got rich simply by reading the quotations. There was a boom in Florida, where property values were going up forever. There was a boom in textiles, and weavers received the unprecedented wage of fifteen dollars a week for only forty-eight hours' work. There was a boom in motors, and talk of everyone owning two cars. There was a boom in utilities, where a smart man named Insull juggled things around magically. There was a boom in houses, where the mortgage money flowed freely and easily. There was a boom in everything, and everyone bought it for a dollar down and a dollar a week.

There were also faint shadows that now and then crossed the glittering bubble. There seemed to be a little corruption in Government, but on the whole Teapot Dome was rather funny. There was a crime wave, but Prohibition was a noble experiment—for everyone else. There was dust gathering in clouds on the prairies; farm prices falling, bit by bit. (But who wants to be a farmer?) Call money inched up, fraction by fraction. (But what's the difference, if your credit's good?) And of course Europe couldn't pay its debts, and the franc was hitting new lows every day, and the ten-cent stores were full of junk from Japan, and there seemed to be quite a bit of unemployment in England. But things were fine in Italy, where Mussolini had marched on Rome, proclaiming, "The body of Liberty is dead, and the corpse is already putrescent." And things were fine in Germany, where the people had finally learned how to run a democracy. They were also fine in that brave new little nation, Czechoslovakia, where the Skoda plant worked day and night turning out munitions for someone—nobody quite knew for whom.

If anyone noticed the shadows, he didn't mention them. Let the

Europeans worry about Europe—we had no business messing around there anyhow. While the boom careened happily on, Ezra Pugh quoted with relish the summation of the President's wisdom, the story of the preacher who had been against sin. Such a sound, homely, down-to-earth philosophy! Nothing you had to think about twice there!

One casualty of the boom was Andrew Hawkes, who lost the election for the State Senate in 1924. He returned to Fall River and opened a law office. The understanding was that he wasn't doing too well. After all, he was a radical and an outsider—couldn't expect people to trust him the way they trusted Bailey Philpott.

4

Evanescent as sunlight on ocean waves, gilding the spray to brilliance but never penetrating below the surface—so was the passion of Kitty and Lucian.

There were no transports of delight in their blowsy love, which did not mean that they failed to enjoy themselves. They both had the will and capacity for this sort of thing, and they got out of it what they sought in it: aggrandisement of themselves. It was all calculated and artful. They spent considerable time selecting unusual gifts for each other, each trying to achieve a price tag higher than the other. They lavished care on times and places, the atmosphere of love; and on accoutrements—the menus for their little suppers, Kitty's perfume, a leopard rug on which to lie before the fire, lustful books to read to each other. They broke into the boarded-up summer houses of respectable Puritans, trying to augment the thrill of love with the thrill of lawlessness as they lay on foreign beds and started at every creaking shutter. They haunted speakeasies, where they held hands openly in the smog, forced their stiff muscles through gyrations on the packed dance floors, drank the unspeakable beverages (knowing they might be rendered blind, mad, paralysed or dead from them), and listened with soporific sentimentality to tired whores moaning the blues. They experimented with novelties of love in a frantic effort to whip some sentience into their jaded pleasure. But since at heart they were both respectable and unimaginative, they achieved nothing by this except secretly uneasy consciences.

The affair remained blowsy. No matter what they tried it retained its bleached-blond, stale-beer looks and flavour. The spirit was lacking. They did not love each other. They did not even like each

other much. Indeed, during the years which had elapsed since their first young raptures and this mournful effort to revive them, they had both become so preoccupied with scrabbling for money that they had lost even the emotional capacity to hate each other. In both of them all feelings except one had dried up: greed. As it manifested itself in various ways, they each called it by different names. But it was still greed. Therefore, when they came together, they could do little except find new ways in which to bore each other to death.

They did not give up, however. They thought of love as sinful, and they did not recognize that anything sinful could be a bore. Lucian kept reminding himself that he was outraging every standard of decency his forefathers had held dear. Kitty prayed lasciviously and went ardently to church to keep before her mind's eye the spectacle of her eternal damnation. It was no use: hell had lost its bite. And they were dismally, hollowly aware that no matter how outrageously they behaved, no one cared. They might have been doing these things on a desert island. For so many years they had both made a habit of using and abusing other people that now they fell into the only rut they knew: they used and abused each other.

If it did nothing else, their tired affair put off a little longer the day when they would have to face the truth about themselves. And for a little longer it kept them young and beautiful, in their own eyes. Therefore the merchandise, shoddy as it was, was worth the price. They paid the devil's blackmail as they would have paid a dope peddler, putting off for another, and another day, the terrible discovery that they were empty, so full of emptiness that even hell had failed to prepare a place for them.

Unless, of course, they had long ago slipped into their places unknowingly and undetected; and the vacuity on which they chewed, as on a ruminative cud, was their special dish at the banquet of the damned. They still looked for fire and smoke: anything less spectacular was insulting.

In their loveless love there were occasional crises, creating moments of pleasant excitement glossing over the barrenness. Most of them happened while Rafe was still at Harvard. There was the time when the speakeasy they were in was raided. Lucian bought off the policemen. And the time when they were in an automobile accident. Lucian's Cadillac suffered only a dented fender and a bent radiator grill, but the farmer he hit was injured, and his car smashed. He sued. The danger of notoriety provided them with a period of nervous titillation during which they made plans for every contingency, day-dreaming of how



they would liquidate their assets, flee from the scandal to the Riviera, and—on Kitty's part—some melodrama over Rafe. But Lucian managed to have the case postponed again and again, until in desperation his victim settled out of court.

Once in a Boston theatre they caught a glimpse of Rafe just as the lights went down, and they had to leave without seeing the play. Once they met Silence Bess on the street in Providence. Lucian said, "That'll give the old nut something to crunch on."

Kitty giggled, then said virtuously, "I always felt sorry for her. Such an empty life."

"Empty? With all her causes?"

"Oh, they don't mean anything. She's still homely, and then—she never *married*."

There was the afternoon in 1924, shortly before Rafe was graduated, when Lucian came to see Kitty in his father's house, a thrill they did not often risk. Barnabas was at the mill. Gramma had resumed her shifting existence, now that Andrew and Rosie were back in Fall River, and took turns living with them and with Kitty. She was at Andrew's that week. The house was pleasantly hushed, as big, clean, overfurnished houses are on a sunny afternoon. The silence was emphasized by the muffled kitchen sounds, the quiet step of a servant over the polished, rug-strewn floors, the distant ring of the back doorbell when the grocery boy came. Lucian and Kitty lay on the couch in Barnabas's study. They'd kept their clothes on to increase the furtiveness of the occasion and to make the furtiveness seem necessary, compulsive. The couch, being hard and narrow, was unsuited to their activity, but this was not important because it was *Barnabas's* couch, a symbol of something they thought they might enjoy defiling.

They did not hear Barnabas come home. They only heard the study door open and saw him standing there. They both flushed scarlet, not modest but angry blushes, and their hearts pounded. Sweat broke out on their bodies. But Barnabas seemed quite unperturbed. He bowed. "I beg your pardon," he said, going out and closing the door.

The most galling thing about the incident was Barnabas's impeccability. He had stood so briefly in the doorway, immaculately neat in his black serge and white linen, while they lay grotesquely on his couch, dishevelled, sticky with the sweat of their tiresome love. His skin had looked white and clean, his hands cool, while theirs felt hot, red, and sticky, and it was borne in on each of them unpleasantly that the other needed a bath. Above all he had seemed to be remote from them, indifferently calm, superior.

"I hate him," said Kitty savagely. "I could kill him."

Lucian stood up, adjusted his shirt, buttoned his trousers. "Oh, well, he probably knew it all along. If he hadn't he'd have been more surprised."

"He acts as if I were some sort of *vegetable*."

"If he says anything, let me know. It can be this happened for the best. If it forces us to leave this Puritan-infested town, we'll bless the day, Kitty, when we're basking on the Riviera." He forced himself to kiss her, although her face looked blotchy, powder and rouge caked in the sweat, and he left her to cope with Barnabas as she saw fit.

No coping was necessary. He never mentioned the incident. This was the most galling after-effect it could have had. At last, goaded beyond discretion by his silence, she brought it up herself. "I'd like to know," she said, "what you intend to do. I have my own plans to make, you know."

"Do? About what?"

"About us."

"Is it necessary to do anything?"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Sure your own sense of decency——"

She stopped. He was silent. The pause grew uncomfortable.

She plunged on. "Most men would—I mean—if they know their wives are——"

"I am not most men," said Barnabas. "And I should suppose you are not most wives. Do not fret yourself over this. I have never made any demands upon you, and I think I never shall."

"But Lucian and I have loved each other for years. Can't you understand what that means?"

Barnabas smiled. "No. Only you can understand that. But it is your affair, and I have no wish to intrude upon it."

"Haven't you any pride at all? Any sense of honour?"

"Pride? I hope not, since I have enough troubles without it. As for my honour—I fail to see, madam, how your amusements impinge upon my honour."

"Madam!" she shrieked, venting all her anger on the cold word. "Now you're calling me Madam as if I were——"

"I beg your pardon. I meant no offence. It's only that sometimes I fall back into old-fashioned ways of speaking. Now if you'll excuse me, I think I shall go for a walk. It's a very pleasant evening."

She stood at the window and watched him go down the street. She felt numb and helpless. Beyond the polished pane and the stiff, lace curtains, the autumn foliage glinted in the twilight. Barnabas's

neat, black-clad figure walked beneath a maple tree that was shedding yellow leaves upon the pavement. Then he turned a corner and was gone. An overpowering wave of desolation swept through Kitty. So might one have felt who was shipwrecked on the immensity of ocean, lost in the waste of waters. It was a cosmic emotion, one beyond tears: incautiously she had opened her eyes, expecting to see only the familiar world, and instead she had seen emptiness, the unimaginable void.

The vision lasted but an instant, yet that meant nothing because time also disappeared, sucked into the emptiness. "Oh, God help me. God help me," she murmured, unaware that she spoke aloud.

Then the world came back, suddenly, in a rush of things. Barnabas's sedate parlour pressed around her, a suffocating mass of things. All this, accumulated slowly by generations of strangers, belonged to her because she was Mrs. Barnabas Olney. But the man she had watched walk away under the yellowing maple tree—he did not belong to her, and he never would. Then a worry stole softly into her mind. Was it possible that at the very end he would still find a way to escape her?

"Well," she said softly to the empty room, "I'd best go up and fix my nails if I'm to meet Lucian."

Any incompatible relationship which goes on long enough finally adjusts itself in precarious equilibrium to what might be called the level of least irritation. Kitty and Lucian found this comfortable spot when they talked about money, business, mills, stocks, real estate. Only then did they forget themselves, engage in frank discussions, lively arguments, and unpremeditated demonstrations of affection. Only then were they really friends. Kitty had come a long way from the days when Lucian had been able to fool her with talk of stocks he couldn't sell; and he, with unconscious fidelity to the mores of his class, respected her for it. True, it was the only thing he did respect in her, now that her beauty was beginning to fade; but he had never found another woman in whom he respected anything at all.

He was making a great deal of money in the cotton market, and she envied the ease with which he did it. It was almost like magic. His luck, or cleverness, on the Cotton Exchange began to wipe out her memory of his early bankruptcy. Probably the story he told her was true: Barnabas had driven him to the wall. Cautiously, she gave him a thousand dollars to invest for her. He brought back five thousand in a few months. After that her faith in him was almost boundless; and she perceived that what he was always telling her was true—real estate was a stodgy, plodding way to get rich. Her eyes grew deep and

dreamy as she contemplated in her mind the wealth that would fall upon her, glorious golden rain, if she got out of property and put her money into something more volatile and more romantic.

She sold three adjacent tenements in the Flint to Mr. Rubashevski, who tore them down and built a store in their place. She said to Lucian, "Think of it! I can remember the day when Minerva Hawkes collected scavenge!"

"Prosperity goes right down to the grass roots now," Lucian answered without rancour. "Even an ex-scavenger can have a slice."

Kitty had no trouble selling all her property. She put most of the money into mill stocks, which the brokers and Lucian told her were better than government bonds. But it was a lot of money to exchange for gilded papers. To have nothing more solid sometimes worried her, and she had to remind herself that if the companies ever went bankrupt she'd get her share of the buildings—solid granite—and land. She did miss collecting her rents, though. There'd always been a little thrill when she entered each dwelling and saw the ragged children, the slatternly woman, the dead-eyed, sullen man; and the way her silks rustled on the floors, and she took the grubby money in her gloved hand, and then gave the children lollipops; and the way those people would look at her, with awe and respect. She kept out some of the money with which to speculate in cotton. And that was such an exciting pastime that it made up, in large measure, for not having the rents any more. Besides, you couldn't have everything in this world. In business you had to keep up with the times. My, she thought, she'd learned a lot since that day when she'd first stepped down from the gangplank of the old *Priscilla*!

5

In 1926, when every other industry was enjoying a period of hysterical boom, a pall of depression began to settle over the New England textile mills. The first expedient, to cut wages in order to preserve dividends, failed to bring the usual happy results. It merely caused the workers to stop spending and to default on their bills. Therefore wages were cut again, and again, and still again. It was not enough. The cotton cloth piled up in the warehouses. No one wanted anything but rayon and silk. Everything from chemises to men's shirts had to be silk, or look like it. The spinning women came to work in rayon,

and the second maids dusted in black taffeta. If some stubborn old woman did buy a piece of cotton in which to scrub her floors, she bought only three yards, sewed it up the sides and left a hole for her neck, two holes for her arms. Ezra Pugh fulminated against the indecency of women's dress, but he wasn't the only one who sighed for the days when fifteen yards had gone into a frock, and there'd been six petticoats and good long drawers beneath it, and women in modest circumstances were lucky if they owned one silk dress in their lives, in which they could, if of an economical turn, be both married and buried.

There was still a market for sheets, but Fall River had few wide looms and the South had a great many. There was still a market for cheesecloth and sacking, but these were now made in the South. There was still a market for Barnabas's diaper cloth, but it had contracted sharply—large families had gone out of fashion with full skirts. Cotton huck towelling, another of his specialities, he could not sell at all: people wanted terrycloth, woven in the South, or linen from Europe. He closed his Number 3 mill in the summer, while he and Rafe racked their brains to think of something they could weave on the idle looms.

A small speciality mill which had formerly made a good thing of checked tablecloths quietly closed, insolvent. Philip Hawkes bought the machinery for six cents on the dollar and sold it in Japan. The city took the building for back taxes. The stockholders spent sad contemplative hours meditating upon the mill's engraved paper lying in their strong boxes. But, as Ezra Pugh said, it was only a small mill—an isolated case of hard luck and bad management. Things would pick up: people had to have cloth, sooner or later. Meanwhile, to Kitty's horror, Pugh's mills passed their dividends.

In deep concern, she asked Lucian, "Shall I sell the shares? Oh, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I wish I'd never let my property go!"

He said lightly, "Cheer up, darling. This is only temporary. You know our mill stock is as good as government bonds. It's just the business cycle."

"But all the other businesses are good! Only textiles——"

"We're fundamentally sound, Kitty. A little recession like this cleans out the dead wood, which isn't a bad thing, you know. That's why the good mills like ours always bound back, bigger and better, with more room to move around in. You wait—by fall all the Pugh mills will be humming."

Kitty did not sell. If she had she'd have lost several thousand

dollars, which would have been like cutting her heart out. The stock continued to fall and her assets melted.

Lucian's finishing plant went down. Pugh closed his coarse goods mills and kept operating only his fine goods mill, but at a loss. A thread mill closed, insolvent. Philip Hawkes bought the machinery and shipped it to Japan. The city took the buildings for back taxes. A man whose entire savings were in the thread mill's paper shot himself. The Anawan went down, and the Chartlon, and the Mechanics', and the Flint, and the Globe; all great cotton mills, the city's pride. The Pocasset, that huge gloomy rampart frowning over the centre of town at the juncture of five streets, went down. Its blank windows brooded over Main Street like the eyes of a maniac in the ultimate stages of melancholia. But people grew used to it. It became just another vacant building, for all its dark malignancy.

Mrs. Ezra Pugh cut down by firing her second maid.

Andrew Hawkes went into business with Philip, who was making a fortune in second-hand mill machinery. They enlisted Anton Rubashevski, who mortgaged his stores to raise capital, and they formed a corporation. This activity of outcasts went unnoticed in the general disaster.

They offered stock to Kitty, thinking not only that she had money, but that she was their friend. "Don't talk to me about stock!" She raised her voice till it had a shrewish edge that reminded Andrew of Rosie's voice, rasping eternally upon his spirit. "It's only fancy paper and a way of robbing women! I'll see you in hell before I'll touch your filthy stock!"

The men were nonplussed by the vehemence of this unprovoked attack. Philip said gently, "Sorry, Kitty. We didn't mean to offend you. We only thought——"

"You thought! I'll thank you to keep your thinking to yourselves, you and your get-rich schemes and your——" Suddenly, unaccountably, she burst into tears.

A light of comprehension dawned in Anton's lean ascetic face. "She bought mill stock. Sold her buildings and—Kitty, is that what you did?"

She tried hard to control herself. "And the cotton. They sold me out on the cotton. I don't understand," she moaned. "I don't understand."

Anton took her hand gently. "I can never say how sorry I am, Kitty. But think, and comfort yourself. Some money is gone, yes, but you still lack for nothing, having a fine house and food and

clothing. No one has died, Kitty. You still have Rafe, and Mr. Olney, and all your friends. Your health is not gone, nor your beauty, nor any valuable thing. Only money is gone."

"Only money," she repeated dully. "Only money——" Suddenly she broke into hysterical laughter. "You fools, don't you know what money is? It's everything—everything, I tell you!" She beat her fists against the arms of her chair in a desperation of grief. "Oh, my money! My beautiful, clean, beautiful money!" Without warning she lashed out and struck Anton on the face. "You dirty Jew! People can kick me now, ramble on me, laugh at me! They can drag me down and spit on me, the low Irish girl I am, they can do that, and laugh at me. Laugh at me! Because you hate me, all of you hate me, and you've always hated me. From the minute I stepped off the boat you hated me! And now I live on the Hill like a lady, you hate me all the more! Oh, my money! My money!" She moaned, wept, and broke once more into wild laughter.

"We'd better go," said Philip. He felt pity for her. Or perhaps not so much for her as because he had once loved her, and now he saw her, a torn rag of avarice, sinking deeper and deeper into muck, as if she were something the earth had to hide.

As they left the house, Anton said, "That is one of the saddest things I have yet seen."

Philip was thinking of his old love: distant madness, wild longing whose shadow, even now, had vanished. That must have happened to another man.

"I didn't know she was like that," said Andrew. "I really didn't."

Anton said, "Perhaps adversity—— I've known many people who were improved by adversity. It may help her in the end."

"I rather think she had enough of it when she was young," said Andrew. "It wasn't easy, what she had to live through. It's odd, you know, but I feel guilty about it. About what happened to her."

"Don't," said Philip. "No one could have stopped her. She was determined to do just what she did."

"I didn't mean we should have stopped her. We didn't have that right. I meant afterwards. Our part in the war of attrition against her."

Philip changed the subject. "Every time I drive through this town now it makes me want to vomit. Look at that." They were passing the Salvation Army Hall. People were lined up four deep on the sidewalk, waiting with gaunt patience for bread and soup. "Do they look ennobled by adversity, Anton?"

"They look like people I remember in Poland, dispossessed Jews

waiting at some country railroad station to be taken in freight cars to a new strange place. And when I was serving in the Russian army I saw prisoners waiting to be taken to Siberia. Of course, here there are no men with whips to strike the one who moves out of line. This is a great difference—that here you see no fear of violence in their eyes. Only peaceful despair. But wherever men without hope wait for something, they look the same.”

They were now driving down South Main Street on their way to the Globe district, where they were to bid on the machinery of another bankrupt mill. It was a weekday afternoon, yet groups of shabby men stood about the corners and in drugstore doorways, talking listlessly, as if they could talk into existence a world without want. In the South Park a preacher harangued a dispirited crowd, adjuring them to repent, for the day of salvation was at hand. As the car penetrated deeper into the Globe, the surroundings grew even more despondent, for here the mills succeeded each other in dreary uniformity. Their walls were dingy with the grime of spent activity. Their blank windows stared in frozen horror upon a world abandoned to the ultimate immorality: idleness. Their hard rule was over. They frowned, monstrous Puritan edifices, upon a world which had escaped the stocks.

Men stood about the millyards, waiting. The buildings, locked in granite despair, let them wait. Andrew said, “I wouldn’t believe this if I didn’t see it. I could not have imagined it.”

“I still don’t really believe it,” said Anton. “A whole industry gone overnight! As if it had been no more real than dreams, and now we wake up. No. Things don’t happen like that. All the time there must have been a rottenness eating at the insides.”

“And you must always have known it,” said Philip. “You never invested a cent in mills.”

“I never had the money for such undertakings. As for working in them—why work long hours and at the end still be hungry? Unless, of course, one works for an ideal, like an art, or a science, or a revolution. Then one must be ready to regard even eating as a luxury. But there is no ideal in serving a machine. For such work that deadens the spirit a man should be paid a premium. It is hard to think of one that would be large enough.”

“Even the devil knew that,” said Philip. “In all his legendary bargains he was willing to give the world in return for a human soul.” He turned the car into a millyard. The listless waiting men got out of the way. “Pugh was to have someone meet us here to show us through. I suppose we’ll have to wait.”



Andrew whistled. "I didn't know Pugh was going under, too."

"They're all going under," said Philip drily.

"Why?" asked Anton. "It is a tremendous business. How can it possibly collapse now, overnight?"

"Stupidity," said Philip. "The only real sin is stupidity. Not sex or laziness or cruelty, but simply bland, blank, virtuous stupidity. And the essence of stupidity is habit, never to do a different thing. Never to take the blinkers off and look at the world. To live is to change. Not to change is to die. When you have a bunch like Pugh, who are so frightened of a new idea that they'd like to kill the person who has it—why, what can you expect? The textile business here has been dead for years. And the managerial class has been standing around admiring the shroud." He lit a cigarette. "I'll bet we'll find the youngest piece of machinery in that mill is well over voting age."

"It's not that simple," said Andrew. "Individual stupidity might wipe them out one at a time, but not all at once like this. Not a whole industry at one stroke."

"This is collective stupidity. The business died of hardening of the arteries. All we're seeing now is the final apoplectic stroke."

Pugh's chauffeur-driven Cadillac turned into the yard. The waiting workers surged toward it. The three men stepped from Philip's car in time to hear Pugh's gruffly genial assurance to them: "Sure we'll reopen. Nothing to worry about. Always have opened sooner or later, haven't we? But no use your waiting around today. Maybe in a week or so——"

The momentary hope died in the workmen's eyes.

"Why's he lying to them?" said Andrew angrily. "He knows this mill isn't worth the powder to blow it to hell."

"That's a new idea. Be several years before he grasps it." Philip walked toward the Cadillac. "Okay, Mr. Pugh. Let's go."

The informal words—an order—galled Ezra unspeakably. "I beg your pardon?" If the consonants had permitted, he would have sputtered. He clung to the Cadillac, defying these menials—mill people and a Jew—to make him budge. They walked on, not even hearing him, and in a moment he followed. It was extremely important to Pugh to sell this machinery, and to sell it quickly. And no one but upstarts and outsiders had any money now to buy it.

The mill was dark in spite of the long shafts of sunlight that came through the grimy windows—golden rapiers slashing the gloom, their glittering points making wounds of light on the oil-soaked floors. The still machinery was battered, antiquated; to Philip's expert eye it seemed

almost as quaint as spinning jennys. Their footsteps and voices echoed in the cavernous rooms which stretched from wall to wall without partitions. The place was dank, cold as only a long unheated building with stone walls six feet thick can grow dank and cold. Its air was stale, and it smelled with a complex mingled smell of old oil, of dirty rags, of dampness, of uncleaned latrines. Cotton lint still hung in the air, visible like dust motes in the sunlight. And faint, like the ghost of the full-bodied odour it should be, one caught whiffs of the old wet laundry smell indigenous to mills.

"How long has it been down?" asked Andrew. His voice rang back, tremendous, roaring through the great still spinning-room.

"About two years," whispered Pugh.

"Too bad you didn't offer it sooner," whispered Philip. "The market's glutted with old machinery now."

Andrew wanted to laugh at the hushed colloquy. It seemed one must always whisper in a mill. If it was down, the noise of a full voice deafened one. Working, it made so much racket only a whisper in another man's ear could be heard.

They walked on, their feet clattering on the slippery floor. Suddenly Philip stopped. "Good God," he said, forgetting to lower his voice. "Mule spindles! I didn't know there were any left in town." He touched the machine nostalgically, like an old lady who shows her wedding bonnet to her grandchildren. "I can't use such curiosities. It's just scrap iron. Half a cent a pound."

Mr. Pugh smiled in a superior manner. "I've always maintained that mules are necessary for fine goods."

"But nobody else maintains that, so there's no market for them. Was this a fine-goods mill?"

They all knew it had not been, therefore Pugh ignored the question. "But surely in Japan, for fine silks——"

Andrew laughed. Mr. Pugh looked at him blankly.

Philip refrained from mentioning that for the most part worms spun fine silk. "I can't use them, except to junk. Half a cent a pound."

"These are new belts," said Pugh, looking overhead at the tangle of pipes, belts, rods. "Put them in only a month before we went down."

"Can't use them. I've never had the Japs ask for belts, so maybe they're electrified. And the South is converting fast." They moved on through the desolate exhibit of antiquities.

Anton listened to everything and looked at everything. It was the first time he'd been in a mill, and he was intensely interested.

They climbed up to the weaverroom. The stairs were steep, ruinous, worn into hollows by the feet of thousands of doffer boys and girls who in their day had carried millions of bobbins to the insatiable looms, which now stood, row upon idle row, sheeted like squatting ghosts. The sheets were grey with dust so thick that its first layers must have fallen far longer than two years before. Andrew pulled back a sheet and looked at the relic under it.

"Six hundred looms in this room," said Pugh with satisfaction.

"Twenty-eights," said Philip. "Non-automatic twenty-eights. How long since you've used these, Mr. Pugh?"

"Why—er—can't say exactly. I believe during the war we——"

"Half a cent a pound," said Philip.

"But my good man! They're sound looms! Why, the parts alone——"

"They're probably a hundred years old, Mr. Pugh. And I can't sell twenty-eight inch looms, except to the Japs. These aren't worth the freight to ship them that distance."

"The thirty-fives are upstairs," said Pugh stiffly.

Here the sheets were cleaner. Andrew said, "You were using these when you went down? And the ones below us were idle?"

"I believe so."

Andrew thought of the doffer children climbing that extra gruelling flight a hundred times a day. "Why didn't you move these down?"

"That would have cost a considerable sum, Mr. Hawkes. Perhaps, not being a business man yourself, you are unaware that the cardinal law of industry is economy. Never wasted a penny, Mr. Hawkes."

"We can use these." Philip made a note of the number and type of the looms.

They wandered on, stopping now and then while Philip wrote something down. The sunlight moved behind another building, leaving this one shrouded in cold dusk, with black shadow monsters rising out of it where the machines stood. When the men stepped at last into the open air they felt relief, as if a clammy hand had released them.

"We'll send our bid by the end of the week," said Philip. "Has the transaction been cleared with the stockholders?"

"Naturally," said Pugh. "Of course, I'm soliciting other bids, and if you base yours on junk prices I'm afraid it will hardly be worth your while to send it." He climbed into his car with aplomb.

"I don't know a thing about it," said Anton, as they drove from the yard, "but it seems to me that place was very inefficiently arranged. No elevator, even!"

"That," said Philip, "would have cost a considerable sum of money."

They all laughed. Andrew said, "It's incredible. How did he ever keep the place going this long? By rights, it should have folded twenty years ago."

"I think what kept it going was Pugh's faith," said Philip. "His monumental faith that if you feed cotton into one end of a mill and cloth comes out the other end, and you sell the cloth, you must be making money."

"One thing bothers me," said Andrew. "Why did old Pugh come himself to show us through? He's such a potentate. There must be plenty of lesser lights he could have sent around."

"Um," said Philip. "I wonder. You'd think the janitor would have done to traffic with the likes of us."

6

Shortly after the Hawkes brothers and Rubashevski left Kitty, Lucian called her and asked her to go for a drive. She took a cab to the end of President Avenue, where she and Lucian always met to avoid being seen together in town. It was desolate country here, barren flat fields, a few trees twisted by many winds, and a wide scattering of nondescript houses. Lucian's cars always waited disdainfully in this drab setting, but none ever more so than the Stutz roadster he was driving in 1927. Kitty got in beside him, and they went by back roads toward Cape Cod. For a long while neither of them spoke. She was afraid if she said anything she would cry again; and he seemed to be struggling with some deep excitement he could not readily put into words.

Finally he burst out, "Kitty, I promised Mr. Pugh I wouldn't breathe a word of this, but I know you're worried over your stock——" He was watching the road, and he did not see the ready tears roll down her cheeks, furrowing her make-up. "If anything gets out, the whole thing will smash. Understand?"

"No. I don't know what you're talking about. And who do I know to tell secrets to?"

"You don't have to be bitter. I know how you feel. All my money's in Pugh stock, too. Well, just you lock it up and don't let anybody get the key. Because one of these days, and not too long either, it's going to be worth ten times what it's ever been."

"Oh Lucian, don't torment me now! It's just paper, not worth the burning. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, if I only had my money back! My rents coming in——" Her voice broke, and she groped in her purse for a handkerchief.

"What if you did? The workers aren't paying their rents, and property's selling for a song. But the Pugh stock—— Kitty, we're going to be rich! And not just piddling rich, either."

"How? Mr. Pugh's next to bankrupt. Philip Hawkes is buying everything up. He came to me today to——" She sighed, remembering that painful encounter. "Everybody's broke except Mr. Olney."

"He's worse off than any of us, if he only knew it. Keeping in production, eating up his capital. Kitty, promise not to breathe a word of this? Not even to Rafe?"

"I promise."

"Mr. Pugh and I had a long talk the other night, and—well, no use giving you the technical details. We're forming a new company. He's the president and I'm the treasurer. It should be the other way round, but prominent as he is, he has to keep in the background, at least for the time being. He has the controlling interest in thirteen mills, and minor interests in a lot more. So what we're going to do is lump them all together, sell off the uneconomical ones, buy in others that are better as they come on the market."

"But Mr. Pugh hasn't a cent! He's bankrupt! He——"

"A lot of people think that, and we want them to go on thinking it. He has mill buildings and machinery. And more know-how than any man in the business. We're going to run the whole outfit as one corporation, be the biggest textile combine in the country. And get this—we're not going to mess with cotton. Going to convert to rayon. That's why no one must find out. If they knew we were going into something revolutionary like rayon, they'd go crazy and we couldn't get a cent from the banks."

"That's horrible sleazy stuff, Lucian. It'll never amount to anything."

"We'll make it amount to something. We'll advertise. You can sell anything if you advertise. Besides, it's selling now. Kitty, we can't miss! Think of it, no spinning! Nothing but looms from top to bottom of every mill!"

"Looms cost money."

"Not with our connections. The loom makers will take stock. They always have. All we need is about half a million——"

"Half a *million*!"

"Um. The buildings are worth ten times that. There won't be any trouble. I went to the banks today, and they'll let me go bond on the buildings and machinery. I don't say they'll be generous, but——"

"What do you mean, go bond?"

"Oh," he said vaguely, "it's sort of like a mortgage, not exactly the same, but—oh, you know. They lend me money on my bond, with the buildings and machinery as security."

"But the buildings don't belong to you. You told me all the property belonged to the stockholders, and maybe they——"

"Pugh owns the controlling interest. So there's no sense calling stockholders' meetings and have them blab the news all over town. It's our only chance, and you know what it would be worth if those old fuddy-duddies kicked it around like a football. Even if you don't like the idea, the banks do, or they wouldn't put up the money."

"If you've been telling the banks, it's no secret by now."

"I don't tell them everything. Just that I'm treasurer of the new Pugh Enterprises—that's what we're calling it. The announcement's going to be in the paper to-night. Everyone will think I've been appointed to see to liquidating the mills, which is just fine. All the banks need to know is that I'm raising money to reorganize the best mills. They're jumping at the chance to do anything that might make Pugh stock come back. They're all loaded with it."

"It sounds all right. Mr. Pugh must know what he's doing. But——"

"No buts about it, darling." Lucian stepped on the gas. "Want to go to Livorno's for dinner? I like his liquor better than the stuff Pete's been passing off on us. And we can get a room at Livorno's if you like."

She didn't much like. But it was better to spend the evening making love to Lucian than to spend it alone. She said, "All right," rather listlessly. And a few more hours flowed away as she tried to forget herself and her new poverty in the furtive obscenity of a smoke-filled speakeasy.

Lucian had very little trouble getting his money. The banks accepted him as the treasurer of Pugh Enterprises, thinking him a likely man for an unpleasant job. It was hopeful that Pugh was trying to do something. With all his managerial ability he should be able to salvage some of his mills, and with them some of the value of the stock the banks held. They sent appraisers around to his mills, and the men wandered through the empty buildings taking inventories of

all the machinery. After them came Ezra Pugh with the Hawkes brothers or others like them, quietly selling this same machinery.

Lucian turned the money he raised over to Ezra, who locked it up in a safe-deposit box.

7

Within a few weeks Kitty developed a solid faith in Pugh Enterprises, and on the strength of it she went to Boston and bought a mink coat. She was probably the only happy person in the town, which now bivouacked a regiment of woes.

Certainly neither Rafe nor Barnabas was happy. Barnabas was not well. As the weeks of worry passed, Rafe watched him grow more frail, and he felt with inward cringing the shadow cast upon his own life by oncoming sorrow. As Barnabas struggled with the burden of the mill, his skin took on the translucent pallor of old age, and his hands, always finely shaped, now showed their veins and the gnarling of their knuckles. His mind remained alert, blessed with curiosity, intelligence, and the serenity of deeply ingrained faith. Now, in extremity, he developed a wry humour that liked to play with irony. He mocked the frailty of his body, as if his mind could drive it into strength, but he was not foolish about his health nor falsely heroic. Without pretension he tried to prolong his life: he took his medicine, avoided unnecessary exertion, rested eight hours each night even when he could not sleep, and refrained from over-eating. Yet he remained so obviously frail that Rafe dreaded each new calamity that fell upon the mill, lest it be the one that tax Barnabas's strength beyond endurance.

Each day they kept the mill running, drained away forever a little more of their resources. But, since Barnabas refused to shut down, Rafe grew accustomed to the creeping disaster and considered as calamities only those swords of circumstance that struck them from outside: a fractional rise in the price of cotton, a rise in the money rate, a mysterious fire in the Number 1 mill which was down, gutting half the building before it was put out, the humidifier system suddenly failing, a wrench falling into a carding machine, twisting its entrails into disuse and starting another fire. There was no end to the things that happened, all calamities now, which in other times would have passed almost unnoticed.

Rafe begged Barnabas to close. Barnabas would shake his head. "I can't. Not yet." He did not tell Rafe what he felt, with uneasy intuition: that if he closed now, the mill would never again reopen.

"We're not suffering too much yet, and if we hang on things may take a turn up. The country as a whole is prosperous. And we have to think of the people."

The morning Barnabas said that, they were sitting in the mill office, and Rafe was opening the mail. In his hand he held the city's bill for the mill taxes, and he would have given a good deal not to have to show it to Barnabas. "At school we used to talk about the people. You know, we'd read books and talk. Sometimes as if the people were a thousand-headed beast, wild and stupid. Sometimes as if they were Almighty God, with a collective will that could do no wrong. And sometimes as a sort of human mud, the necessary slimy substratum of something called 'Society'."

Barnabas smiled. "They're all that, and more. It's sad to think about people, the millions of all the different times and nations, from the hairy apes with cudgels, whose immortality is now a bone in a museum, to the weavers at their looms. To us. All that monumental striving, the unnumbered millions born in hope and dying, most of them, in despair. In a way they are Godlike because they act, and we can never know whether the act was wise or foolish because it is done, forever, frozen in all that time. The people make what is, building on what was, which they also make. Whatever happened once is divine because it is true. A thing once done is a fact forever, whether we judge it good or bad. We don't know that it is the only thing that could have happened, but we do know that it is the thing that *did* happen, that can never now be made not to happen. And so this moment and all that is doing in it is also divine, because in another moment what is doing will be done, for better or worse. No, that is not correct. Better and worse have meaning only when we think of what we may do, never when we think of what we did do, for that, being done, has become true forever. Truth cannot be qualified with better or worse. It merely exists, divine and unchangeable and immortal. When something happens that pleases us, we take the credit for it. When something happens that we don't like, we say it is the will of God. Perhaps we aren't lying. It's the will of the past, of the actions we froze into truth behind us as we went along. The will of truth—the thing that is now necessary because all the other willings of God stretching back to the hairy apes were also necessary. Not one spoken word can ever be unsaid, nor one fallen sparrow lifted back into the nest. Life seems to us so fragile, with its shifting, numbered days. But life in passing leaves tracks of stone, the sum of all the time once lived."



Barnabas talked as if to himself, thinking aloud thoughts long mulled over and decided. He did not realize there was anything incongruous in his thinking them, nor that he should be ashamed to speak them aloud. After all, he had lived for twenty years with no companion, not even a dog. It was hardly surprising that a man alone so long should dredge up from the silence a few things to say when at last he had someone to say them to.

Rafe said, "But however immortal our actions may be, the people aren't God."

"No. We're only fragments of God. I think I believe in a transcendent spirit, impossible to imagine. But do I really? Or do I believe in it and worship something else? Something brought down into humanity, something that in our ignorance and limitation we have contrived to make flesh. I can't comprehend a transcendent spirit pervading all the universe. Can I worship what I can't begin to understand?"

"Oh, you worship it *because* you don't understand," said Rafe. "Like me worshipping electricity when I was small. Now I understand it I don't even respect it."

"Um. But you *believe* in it. Nothing could shake my faith that two and two are four."

Rafe laughed. "But you'd never consent to die for such a belief."

"No. But I wonder, if circumstances were different, if I'd let myself be fed to lions or burned at the stake for the sake of a transcendent spirit I can't even imagine."

"But you would. And it wouldn't be dying for the transcendent spirit, though you might call it that. You'd know, even while the lion was chewing you up, that the transcendent spirit didn't give a damn what happened to you. You'd be dying for the immanent spirit within you—for the good of your soul."

"Yes," said Barnabas. "People will die for what they believe is right, but not for what they know to be true. How did you find that out?"

"Why, I don't know. I just feel there might be times when it would be easier to die for what you thought was right than to live with what you knew was wrong. Perhaps it's only a matter of integrity, when you boil it down."

"Only integrity?"

"Yes, sir. It's—well integrity isn't very tangible, is it? I mean, it seems to shift with the times, or be different things to different people."

"Oh, no!" protested Barnabas. "There must be an immutable quality to what is truly ethical."

"Perhaps—for those who can die the great deaths for the transcendent spirit—for Jesus or for Socrates. But I'm talking about us, just ordinary people who have to grope our way along, dying for the wrong causes just as grandly as if they were the right ones. Sinning without knowing it, smug, virtuous little sinners. Like Inquisitors burning witches. They were all fine upstanding men, you know, doing the wrong thing with deadly rightness."

"But somebody else was doing the dying," said Barnabas drily.

"Yes, but you see what I mean."

"I see what you mean. Inadvertent sin—it's a grievous responsibility to assert that you're right, for you may get hold of the power to kill the fellow you assert is wrong. And the more certain you are of your rightness, the stronger the temptation to kill becomes, until at last it would be irresistible, and woe unto the dissenter. What a lot of trouble we go to merely to have history make fools of us! Because only the dissenter survives intact, with a name. The rest of us, the unconscious sinners, become that lump of anonymity—the people." He smiled. "This is a lot of big talk when, after all, I'm only dying a financial death. The penalty for putting all my chips on what seems to be turning out to be the wrong system. Rafe, am I a fool to keep the mill open just so the help can refrain from starving a few weeks longer?"

"I don't know what's right," said Rafe. "I've never heard of anything like this. I couldn't imagine a whole town going broke at once, not if I hadn't seen it. I always thought the mills were as solid as Gibraltar."

"Most of them would have gone under in 1914 if the war hadn't saved them. We've never let any other industries come to town for fear they'd raise wages. Now, when we're dying of bad management and greed and Southern competition, there's nothing to cushion the shock. If there were somewhere else our people could go, I'd close. As it is, I think it's right to stay open as long as we can. Fortunately, we've no stockholders."

"And we're not being asked to die for what is right, this time. It's only money we're losing."

"There's been a lot of progress lately," said Barnabas wryly. "Possibly we've progressed to the point where money is more valuable than life. If so, we can congratulate ourselves upon the excruciating benefit we are conferring upon our souls." He reached out his hand. "Give me the tax bill. You can't keep it secret forever."

Rafe pushed it across the desk. "If we pay it now, we can't meet our payroll."

"We have a few weeks' grace. Something may happen to——"

"If you mean the case may be settled, no. It won't even come up before next summer, from all I can find out."

Rafe referred to a suit which had been brought against the city by the textile manufacturers, seeking redress for unfair, discriminatory, and prejudicial taxation. In 1927 there were mills in the city which had not turned a spindle for a year, two years, or even longer. There were others, like Barnabas's, which had been on a part-time basis for months and where only a fraction of the available machinery was in use. Of Barnabas's five mills only two, the most modern, were working, and those only three days a week. Yet, because he had recently bought some improved machinery from Philip Hawkes, his tax bill was higher than it had ever been in the history of the mill. A timely settlement of the lawsuit in favour of the mills and a more enlightened system of taxation would give the manufacturers capital to reopen and a more favourable cost base on which to meet Southern competition. But the case dragged on. Mill after mill closed, and the toll of unpaid taxes mounted until the city itself was threatened with bankruptcy.

Having done its share to kill its one industry, the city now had no means to relieve the thousands of unemployed workers, who had no dole money to buy food with, nothing left to mortgage or sell, and no backlog of savings with which to pay their own taxes if they were lucky enough to own anything taxable. Even the craft unions, which in 1904 had been strong enough to see the workers through the Long Strike, could not furnish them now with relief money. By 1927 the craft unions, hounded, reviled, impoverished, and broken by wave after wave of immigration, were too weak to offer anything but words to the desperate shabby men who besieged them for help. If the weavers and spinners ate in 1927, it was the bread of debt and the soup of charity.

Barnabas said, "We'll have to dump the cloth."

"If we can get yesterday's prices we'll lose twelve thousand dollars. I figured it out last night."

"But if we go on holding it we may get less, and certainly we'll have to rent warehouse space for it in a few more weeks, which will add to our costs. Then——"

"Perhaps we shouldn't pay the taxes. No one else is paying."

"That isn't an honourable course. The law is clear. If the courts decide for us, as I think they will, the money will be returned."

"When we don't need it. Or when the city's too broke to pay it. It's now we need it, not ten years from now."

"Nevertheless, we must pay our bills as long as we can."

"We might sell some more old machinery to Mr. Hawkes, but we'd hardly get anything for it, I suppose, with everything going now for old-iron prices."

"And we can mortgage the mills and the two houses. That would give me a little money to gamble with. Cotton is certainly due for a rise. Or it might be better to sell the Westport Harbor house. I don't think your mother cares much for the Harbor."

"It isn't worth much, is it?"

"Not really. But there are always snobs willing to pay anything for the privilege of being snubbed there. Will you telephone the Fall River Line and ask them if they can take our cloth down to New York tonight?"

8

Thus, by one dodge and another, they kept the mill open while it slowly bled them white. The more they lost, the more stubborn they became, for it was after all a matter of integrity. Neither of them thought of telling Kitty what they were doing. They avoided her during those days of trouble, knowing that she would be out of sympathy with their determination and its motives. Having no logical defence, they fled from argument. Barnabas did not mention selling the Westport Harbor house, nor mortgaging the mill and the Rock Street house. When for the first time in his life he lost money on the Cotton Exchange, he did not mention that either. He realized that no man in desperate need should hope to gain from speculation: need somehow flouted the gods of chance like an insult flung in their faces. Also he worried now about his ventures, which was another bad sign. It caused him to lose the intuition that had always told him when to buy and sell. When he was sold out, losing twenty thousand dollars of the mortgage money, he felt ashamed, guilty. He knew that to feel so was fatal to any future success and that probably, if he went back into the market immediately, he would recover his losses. But he could not shake the feelings of shame and guilt. He dared not risk the small amount of money he had left. Thus he turned his back on the one avenue of escape from his losses. He paid his tax bill, his cotton bills, his shipping bills, and met his payroll with the rest of the mortgage money. He continued to send his cloth to

New York as he produced it, dumping it at more and more ruinous losses.

When he received the bill for Kitty's new mink coat, he said, "You'll have to manage to pay for this yourself." She assumed that he was at last trying to humiliate her because of her affair with Lucian, not that he really lacked the money. The mill was working, wasn't it? Barnabas was still keeping the ancient, useless O'Hearns, wasn't he? Why, he hadn't even fired the second maid, as everyone else had done. She tried to get the money from Lucian, but he had nothing, hardly enough small change to buy gasoline for his car or to pay their dinner and hotel bills when they went out together. He told her to send the coat back and buy another next year when Pugh Enterprises began to pay off.

Feeling betrayed, she retreated into her dreams. There were warning voices all around her, but she chose not to listen. At last, on a day in November, 1927, one voice was raised to a veritable shriek in her ears. She managed to ignore it as comfortably as if she had been deaf.

On a Sunday afternoon she had gone to see Minerva, who, with Silence Bess, was trying to whip the flagging heart of charity into providing Thanksgiving dinners for the mill workers. When the meeting was over, Kitty and Silence remained to help Minerva clean up. Since the damage twenty women drinking tea can do to a living room is extensive, this kept them until supper time. She and Silence stayed to supper. While they were still sitting at the table drinking coffee and nibbling without appetite at the petits fours left from tea, Andrew and Philip Hawkes came in, much excited, to see Mr. Rubashevski. The maid brought cups and served them coffee, and Minerva shoved a plate of cookies at them. "Eat 'em up," she commanded. "The only things more depressing than the funeral-baked meats are the baked meats from a charity tea."

The Hawkes brothers were not interested in food, however delicate. Philip said, "We're in trouble, Anton. It may turn out to be pretty serious."

"So?"

"That machinery we bought from Pugh's mill in the Globe. It seems——" Philip played nervously with his coffee spoon. "Seems it didn't belong to Pugh."

Anton's sensitive face showed his concern. "But—surely Mr. Pugh would not—you mean the stockholders——"

"No. Apparently they're just innocent sheep being fed to the wolves."

Kitty was about to retort sharply, but she remembered in time that the Pugh stockholders would have the last laugh. She hugged the knowledge to herself, thinking that no doubt Anton and the Hawkes brothers had been up to some sharp dealing, trying to cheat the great Pugh Enterprises. And now they'd been found out. Served them right. Nothing so annoyed Kitty as to see Philip Hawkes getting rich while she was getting poor.

"Then what is it, Philip?"

"The machinery we bought belongs to the Merchants Bank, down to the last spindle. They bonded it. We moved it out Friday. Saturday——"

"Excuse me, Philip." Anton stood up. "Perhaps we should go into the library. Such a business discussion can only bore the ladies." He bowed in a courtly old-fashioned manner to his wife. "Will you excuse us, Minerva?"

When they were seated in the library with some brandy which Anton vowed had *really* come from Canada, he said, "Now tell me everything. It sounds very bad."

"It's worse than bad," said Philip. "Pugh called me Thursday accepting our bid providing we paid cash and moved the machinery out immediately, within twenty-four hours."

"You know that sounds damned funny when you put it baldly that way," said Andrew.

"We didn't think anything of it at the time, except that it was going to hump us to arrange it. Pugh said he'd sold the building and the people who'd bought it wanted it cleared immediately."

"Hm," said Anton. "For empty mills there is no unseemly rush."

"Then he sent a Western Union boy around to get my cheque and give me the bill of sale."

"You have Pugh's signature on the bill of sale then," said Anton.

Philip shook his head. "No. We have Lucian Olney's signature on the bill of sale. The treasurer of the Pugh Enterprises."

"So. But you made the cheque out to Ezra Pugh?"

"No. I was told to make it out to Pugh Enterprises. I'll try to get it from the bank tomorrow and see who endorsed it. I strongly suspect——"

"This is terrible," said Anton. "I have bought and sold buildings, whole consignments of goods, on no more than a man's word. This—how did you find out about the bank bond?"

"From the bank. We moved the stuff out Friday. Yesterday the bank sent men around to the mill to check the inventory and seal the

building. And of course it was bare as a weaver's cupboard. Mr. Landon from the bank came to see me this afternoon. He's trying to keep everything quiet, so he's doing the checking himself—slow work. He began with Pugh, who told him he had no knowledge that the buildings and their contents were bonded to the bank. He admitted he'd been trying to sell machinery, but he said—now get this—that so far the sales had not been completed because he had received no money yet. Mr. Landon then started checking on all the people who've been buying out the mills. He found Simonov here in town, a firm in Providence, one in New York, and us. We all bought machinery from Pugh mills, paid for it, and moved it out last week. The New York outfit also bought a building. I asked if Pugh had also showed them around the mills and got their bids, but Mr. Landon wouldn't tell me."

Andrew said, "It's just struck me. Did you notice when Pugh took us through the mill there wasn't even a watchman on the place? We didn't see a soul in the building."

"True, true," said Anton. "Here is a thing happening that I do not really believe. Among honourable people—no. Inside myself I feel it happening, such a disaster, but I cannot believe it."

"I asked Mr. Landon if his or other banks had stood bond for the other Pugh mills, but he said he couldn't answer that, although he's so upset by the whole thing that I suspect it's true."

"Did you tell him we'd return the machinery?" asked Anton.

"No. I wanted to talk to Andrew first and find out what the law is. But of course we can't sell it now. We can return it or keep it in our sheds rotting away for months, but we certainly can't get our money out of it until this is cleared up."

"I haven't had time to read over all the law," said Andrew, "but I think it's best not to return the stuff just yet. I know it looks like a gigantic fraud, but it could be a misunderstanding. Perhaps when we can talk to Pugh——"

"Why can't you talk to Pugh?" asked Anton sharply.

Philip answered. "Pugh's in Boston. Left suddenly yesterday on business."

"I see. Yes. This is a very bitter thing, boys. It would please me if you return the machinery without delay. You can get the bank's receipt for everything. That will be enough to press our claims against Mr. Pugh."

"But we don't know enough yet," Andrew protested. "It may turn out——"

"It will turn out badly, Andrew. Much thought has gone into this scheme from some man's desperate brain. I do not say who that man is. I do not know. This I do know. I am a Jew. Simonov is a Jew. Perhaps also the people in Providence and New York. There are those who say already that the Jews are flocking into Fall River like vultures to pick the bones of the mills, to cheat the honest Yankees of their last penny. They say the Jews are buying up the mills for nothing and selling them for fortunes. From there in time they will go on to say the Jews ruined the textile mills, that the Jews are implicated in frauds and crooked dealings. I do not say the man who planned this did so to bring trouble to Jews. No doubt he did it to save his own fortune. But please, I beg you, return everything to the bank."

"But it's forty thousand dollars!" said Philip. "We haven't——"

"I know. It will make things hard. If we lose it, I shall make it up to you in time. Perhaps, even, I can raise it quickly. Who knows? I have friends."

"But no one else will do that," said Andrew. "Not before he knows what's really up. And the courts won't be prejudiced because you're a Jew."

Philip said, "We're in this together, and you're not going to take this loss on yourself, Anton. What Andrew says is——"

"No, please. You do not understand. It is not the courts I am thinking of. You must see, here is a great business, the biggest cotton textile business in the world, perhaps, all concentrated in this small corner of New England. On top of everything are all these people, the fine Yankee managers. From all over they bring workers, the English, the Irish, the French, the Portuguese. But when the Jews come, a small handful, they do not work in the mills in conditions of indignity for starvation wages and strikes and lay-offs. They peddle bananas and buy old clothes and old iron and open small stores, perhaps, and they work day and night, hard, but they work for themselves and not for the mill owners. This is a thing to resent, that Jews flout the great, and in their small way say to hell with them. Now comes the time when suddenly the big orgy of greed collapses. There is behind such a thing years of mismanagement and bad judgment. As the Psalmist says, 'How are the mighty fallen!' But the Jews have nothing to do with it. For that reason, in the day of disaster, only the Jews have money left. We buy the machinery because to do so is good business, though we have to scrape and borrow and take big chances to do it. The fallen mighty are happy to sell, very happy to take even Jewish money. But tomorrow, when they wake up from this nightmare, are



they going to say, 'We were greedy, we mismanaged, we used bad judgment.' No. They are going to say, 'We were once giants on the earth and now we have but two houses left, and only half a million or so in government bonds, and no butler, and this is because the dirty Jews cheated us and bought our machinery by tricks for a song.' They will tell this to their children, saying, 'Never trust a Jew.' Philip, they will find causes to mock Miriam and Leah. They will mock Minerva, who showed the bad taste to marry a Jew. I am not young now. I have been through worse persecutions than these people can make for us, for they are people with little imagination. But it is hard for women to live in an unfriendly world. It is not enough for us to say to our wives, 'I love you, do not care if others revile you.' Women need many kinds of love, many different admirations. I do not say they lack courage for loneliness or the stamina for torment. I say only that women in a loveless world are like flowers in a drought. Please, Philip, believe me when I say America is good, perhaps the best place we can be. But there is nowhere on earth that it is easy to be a Jew."

"I'll talk to Mr. Landon in the morning," said Philip.

"Yes. Thank you. And I shall go to New York to see if there is any way I can raise more money to make up this unfortunate loss."

## 9

The Friday following Kitty's visit to Minerva's was a snowy November day. She had spent the afternoon at the Red Cross taking donations for the Thanksgiving baskets, and when she returned home she picked up the evening paper from the front porch. Because it was sodden from lying in the snow, she spread it on the living-room radiator to dry. The oversized headline jumped out at her, each heavy stroke of its black letters like a club beating at her brain.

### OLNEY FRAUD EXPOSED

#### Pugh Treasurer Implicated

A stony numbness crept over her. Her legs felt suddenly heavy, her feet rooted to the floor as they sometimes were in nightmares when she could not run from the ultimate overwhelming disaster that pursued her. She read on, fighting against her growing dizziness, trying to force the blurred print to yield the truth from the wet, grey paper.

"Fall River banks, acting in conjunction, today brought charges against Lucian Olney, treasurer of Pugh Enterprises. The banks ask indictment of Olney for grand larceny and fraud. Pending action on his bail, Olney is being held in Fall River, but it is expected he will soon be moved to Taunton, where the grand jury is sitting at present.

"A prominent banker said when interviewed that the bank's charges were based upon the assumption that Olney sold bank property, notably mill machinery belonging to the stockholders of Pugh Enterprises and heavily mortgaged to the bank. He refused to name the purchasers, but admitted that both the purchasers and the stockholders might press further charges against Olney.

"Olney denied the charges, although he admitted obtaining loans from the banks on the Pugh mills. But he said he had never sold any buildings or equipment to companies or individuals now buying up the liquidated mills. Olney said, 'I don't know what this is all about, but it is clearly a mistake, since I never sold mill property after bonding it to the banks. All the mortgages were arranged on Mr. Pugh's orders to obtain funds for the reorganization of the Company and to enable some of the more modern mills to start production on an economical profit basis.' Olney denied any intent to defraud the stockholders, saying, 'Everything I did was in their interest. It is all a misunderstanding which will be cleared up as soon as Mr. Pugh returns from Boston.'

"The prominence of the Pugh and Olney families and their long records of disinterested service to the community both as managers in the city's key industry and as civic leaders make it seem likely—(Turn to Page 3.)"

Meekly Kitty attempted to do so. She was deadened by shock. Hypnotized, she lifted the wet page. It tore halfway across. In numb acquiescence to defeat, she left the ragged paper on the radiator, turned heavily, and dragged herself upstairs, clinging to the banister. It was five o'clock in the afternoon. The sky outside her bedroom window was the colour of the wet newsprint. The branches of bare trees were like black headlines. The twigs made letters on the sky. She could stand there and read it all over again, and again, and again, until darkness fell and everything was black.

She closed the shutters and turned on the light. Then she stood and stared at her face in the mirror. "Holy Mother of God," she thought, "why can't I cry?"

She moved about the room, her feet making no sound on the thick carpet. She did things as if acting under compulsion. She undressed

herself, folding all her clothes and putting them away. She went into her bathroom and took a long hot bath. The wayward conviction rose in her strongly: this had all happened before. Once before, a room with the sky shut out, a locked door, lights burning, the lingering hot bath, and Lucian, Lucian—the name rose higher and higher in her mind, like a waxing scream.

She put on her best nightgown and went to bed, where she lay staring into the darkness for a long while; until finally she began to cry, slow, grudging tears. In her life she had wept for a thousand things: for her unwanted child, a spoiled dress, Rosie's insults, even a burned cake. Now she had lost all that mattered to her, the money, and there came for comfort only these few niggardly tears. She lay there, thinking that there was no grief like her grief, no sorrow under heaven like her sorrow; and she found that even her tears had grown stingy.

She finally fell asleep, to awaken some time in the bleak early morning suddenly, wide-eyed, her mind fastened leech-like upon one clarion thought: "Barnabas has plenty of money. And I'm his wife!" She fell asleep again, her beautifully moulded mouth curved into a gentle smile. She slept on her side, with one arm across her chest, as if she hugged herself.

10

Barnabas and Rafe learned the news while they were still at the mill. It meant little to Rafe, who had never liked what he had seen of Lucian Olney; but he was deeply disturbed over the effect it might have on Barnabas. Sometimes when Rafe looked suddenly at him, the boy felt an inward tearing, sickening, like the sensation of falling. He pushed away the thought of Barnabas's death, and only in his dreams, with the will gone, did he sometimes find himself wandering in grey bogs of loneliness, where under lowering skies he cried and screamed the names of those he knew, of all those who had cherished him, and the names echoed and re-echoed from the barren rocks, cried back to him in desolation, empty sounds, echoes, never in all those dreams of loneliness a human voice.

With the notion of sheltering Barnabas, he wanted to go to the police station with him. But Barnabas insisted on going alone. "We must not embarrass Lucian more than we can help. I doubt if there is anything I can do for him, but——" Barnabas shrugged wearily. "You'd best go home, Rafe. Your mother may need you."

"Why on earth should she? This has nothing to do with her."

"I fear she had money in those mills. She never told me so, but I suspect it. She may be very upset, needing comfort."

Barnabas found Lucian in his shirt sleeves, playing poker with the policemen. The environment was unusual, lifting both Lucian and Barnabas out of the ordinary context of their lives. Perhaps for that reason Barnabas saw the outward form of his son, the shell, as a stranger might have seen it. The havoc time had wrought on Lucian was all there, a sudden portrait, frozen in naked revelation before Barnabas's eyes. This was the real Lucian. His face was red, insensitive, jowly. His body was coarse and paunchy. His shallow grey eyes shifted uneasily over the cards and over the policemen's faces. With shock, as he watched in that moment when Lucian did not know he was being watched, Barnabas saw that his son was stupid. He was neither vicious nor evil—nothing so positive. He was merely a middle-aged fool, a liar, and possibly also a thief from stupidity. Without purpose or malice he had laid crude hands on Kitty McCarran's life, on Barnabas's, on Rafe's, and now perhaps on the lives of hundreds of people he did not even know. With the crass, blank power of stupidity he had twisted and distorted all those lives into crooked shapes, and he was too stupid to have much comprehension of what he had done. In his own small sphere he made history as blithely as an idiot king.

Among the policemen with whom he played there were several with faces more alert, more sensitive, than Lucian's; but had the thief worn a uniform he would have been indistinguishable from the others. What he had then was a talent for indiscriminate adaptability. With that, his only genius, he had passed for a gentleman. He had passed for a mill manager, dressed, talked, thought like the other mill managers, picked the clichés from their minds and planted them in his own. No doubt when he had made the tour of Europe he had been indistinguishable from the other international fops; and in school from the other empty-headed heroes of the playing fields. If his destiny took him to prison he would become indistinguishable from the other convicts, whether he was guilty or innocent. After a few days there Lucian would be talking the convict lingo, shuffling with the convict gait, adopting the convict ambitions as his own. After prison, or instead of it, he had numerous careers open to him: he could hang around race-tracks, indistinguishable from the other touts; he could open a "bucket shop", turn pimp, or join a gang of rum-runners. And anyone who met him engaged in any of these pursuits would

assume he had never played any other rôle, so convincingly would he play that one. An empty vessel can be filled with anything.

Making this unwilling judgment, Barnabas watched his son whose grasping folly would always devour everything it could get to feed on. With awful penetration, Barnabas felt that he was looking at something which could not exist: a man without a soul.

He stepped through the doorway into the glaring light of the back room. "May I speak to you a moment, Lucian?"

Lucian picked up the money that lay in front of him, handed the cards he was dealing to the man next to him, and strolled nonchalantly toward his father.

"Is there any place we can talk quietly?" asked Barnabas.

"My cell. My only neighbour is a drunk sleeping it off." Lucian winked at his poker cronies as he led his father toward the corridor of cells.

"They're treating you very considerately," said Barnabas.

"Oh, I've bribed them all for one thing and another in my time. I suppose you came about my bail. It's ten thousand dollars."

Barnabas felt a terrible constriction of the heart. It grew into a pain that filled his chest. He forced himself to breathe evenly, slowly, pushing the breath past the pain. "Isn't that rather a lot?"

"The banks didn't want to allow any. But it doesn't matter, since you're loaded." Lucian sat down on the edge of his bunk.

Barnabas stood, clutching the bars beside the open cell door. "You're mistaken. I do not have ten thousand dollars, Lucian."

"You mean you won't shell out."

"I mean I don't have it!" For Barnabas, the tone was sharp. "Are you guilty of this crime, Lucian?"

"Of course not. I don't even know what it's all about." He cast upon his father a smile that was meant to be ingratiating, but in that jaded, bland face it merely looked sly. "I only know what I read in the papers."

"But you must have done something! I want to believe you innocent, Lucian, but you must be somehow involved. You must have signed something, made some commitments. Otherwise—after all, our bankers do not go out beating the bushes for innocent people to fasten accusations on them."

"It's some misunderstanding," said Lucian easily. "When Mr. Pugh gets back from Boston, he can explain it. So far as signing things goes, of course I did. I'm the treasurer. It's my job to sign everything."

"Explain to me what you did. What was this reorganization scheme?"

Lucian explained it in the same glowing language he had used to Kitty. He had got loans from the banks, putting up the Pugh mills and machinery as security. He had signed all the inventories as Pugh gave them to him.

"Inventories for the banks?"

"Of course. What else?"

"Did you read them before signing?"

"No. Who'd read pages of machinery inventories?" He looked at his father uneasily. "What are you getting at?"

"Possibly you signed bills of sale. Certainly much of the machinery was sold. Those who bought it certainly did not pay for it without taking receipts. But you didn't sell anything?"

"No. I just got the loans, turned the banks' cheques over to Mr. Pugh——"

"You endorsed the cheques?"

"Naturally. That's the treasurer's job, isn't it?"

"Did Ezra deposit the money to the corporation's account?"

Lucian shifted nervously on the edge of the bunk. "Er—no, he didn't. Matter of fact, I didn't give him the cheques. I cashed them and he put the cash in a safe or something. He's afraid the banks will fail, and I think he's right. They're loaded with worthless mill paper. They'll never hang on, not all of them, until the mills get back on their feet."

"How much money did you get from the banks?"

"A little over half a million. They deducted all the back taxes due, mortgages, every damned thing they could think of, and they wouldn't allow anything for most of the machinery. They called it junk."

"And Ezra has all that cash hidden somewhere?"

"He'd better have! I'm certainly not planning to——"

"Lucian, somebody sold out those mills. I called up Landon, and he has proof they were sold. You signed the bills of sale, you must know more about it. Try to think, Lucian! This is serious!"

"But I don't know more! You think I stopped to read everything they shoved at me to sign? And I never even talked to anyone about buying out the mills. It's probably all some dirty frame-up. What can you expect? Kikes like Rubashevski buying out our——"

"Watch your language, Lucian! Mr. Rubashevski is my friend."

"Moving in high society now, eh? Well, you can have him. If you're such a friend of his why don't you ask him what happened? He knows all the vultures who are picking our bones."

"I think I shall. Goodnight, Lucian." Abruptly Barnabas was

gone, down the line of cells, past the poker game, past the bored desk sergeant who was listening with the impassivity of blind justice to the woes of a streetwalker and the policeman's tale of her sins. He hailed a taxi and rode to Rubashevski's, where he learned that Pugh, not Lucian, had arranged the mill sale.

"Have you the cancelled cheque?"

Anton nodded sadly. "It is painful to tell you this, Mr. Olney. It was endorsed by your son."

"But he says he endorsed only the bank's cheques!"

"Perhaps you can get the bank to tell you who cashed it. It went through the Anawan Trust. I asked them, but they answered me only to say their clients' affairs are confidential."

"Not this client's—not any more," said Barnabas bitterly.

"Just so."

"Lucian claims he is innocent. I—I couldn't stand his bail."

"How much?"

"Too much. Ten thousand dollars."

"Perhaps I—times are bad with us now. This loss—but perhaps I can borrow——"

"No. Mr. Pugh probably has the money. You have been hurt enough by this."

"Let us not misunderstand. For you I would do it, if it comforts you. Not for him. I do not know him."

"No. I cannot ask it of you. I want no one to sacrifice——"

"What is money? My friend, I ask you—what is money when the heart suffers?"

By heritage and experience there were hardly two men on earth such poles apart as Barnabas and Anton Rubashevski. Yet in the sound of this gentle voice speaking its careful un-English English, Barnabas found what he had lacked for twenty-five years, the respect and understanding of one who was his equal—equal in age, in sex, in intelligence, in sensitivity, in integrity. And he knew, as he felt the strange warmth so akin to love flow into him, what it had meant to him to live for a quarter of a century without a friend.

Barnabas said, "There is a sort of bitter peace, Anton, that comes from the ultimate grief. If you survive it, and of course we always do, you find yourself on a plane of the endurable. No joy, perhaps, but never again the ultimate grief. No mountains, and no abyss."

"It is not true," said Anton. "Another love, another grief. And who can measure one love beside the next, or match the sorrows like beads on a chain? My first wife—Russian soldiers took her. They

tied her to a bed and raped her, one after another, waiting their turns in a long line. When at last she mercifully fainted, they beat her till she died. I have never told another soul of this. I don't know why I tell you now when—— Ah well—you see, I thought I should go mad until I learned to bear the pain of that—of her death, and how she died. Now, do you know, it is all far away and like a dream, like some terrible thing another man has told me of. And now there is Minerva. Can I measure one love beside the other? No. I came on them at different times, with different needs, and to each I gave an empty heart. What is age, to make the well of love run dry? That I ask you. To each his time, and to each time its love, and for each love its proper grief. And when at last it is finished, and we face the mystery and that ordeal, the time of parting with ourselves, then we say, I lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my salvation, for the Lord is my strength and my salvation. I ask you, what is he worth who finally must say that with an empty and an unscarred heart?"

Barnabas reached out and touched Anton's hand lightly. "Thank you, my friend. But listen, I don't trust Lucian. I let him tell me he was innocent, but there was nothing in his voice, nothing in *him*—you understand?—to tell me whether he lied. Is that a sort of grief, to stand there holding the bars, listening to my son plead his innocence, and hear a cool voice speaking in my mind, 'He's lying?'"

"But I told you. I will try to borrow the money for his bail. It makes no difference if he is innocent or guilty."

"No. If I had it, I'd give it to him. But he shan't make you suffer for my sake. Not you, nor anyone. Not any more." Barnabas's voice fell to a whisper. "He is Rafe's father. He went from that dishonour to another, and another, and perhaps even to others I know nothing about. How can I believe him? Lies—years and years of lies—— He is my son, and I can't believe him, not even in his extremity."

A silence fell between them, and although it solved no problems, it brought a measure of peace. Each of them had long needed to confess the thing that lay stone-heavy on his life. Now each had spoken. If they never met again each had a kindness to remember in the other, a need fulfilled and sealed with silence. Each had relieved the other of a burden, and the relief was a last-minute gift. But it was no less valuable for coming late; nor for being, when you examined it closely, merely kindness.



Ezra Pugh came home in haste, declaring loudly that he would get to the bottom of this thing if it took the rest of his life. He was stunned, shocked beyond belief, indignant. He bellowed that the boy was innocent. The boy was incapable of any dark, underhanded deed. "Why, do you realize the planning a thing like this would take? The shrewdness, the dirty crooked mind a man would have to have? No, sir!" And Pugh would bang on anything handy for banging. "Blood tells, character tells. Damn it, sir, you're not dealing with riff-raff! The boy's an Olney!" Then, as if the name reminded him of something dubious and unpleasant, his face would show the first twinge of doubt. And, if he were speaking to the right person, he would murmur, "Of course, his father——" He would hesitate, as if inwardly debating just how far one could really trust blood, and if indeed the sins of the fathers—then, with an obvious effort of will, an act of faith, he would finish: "No, there was a clean break between them. He's an honourable boy, sir. I'll stake my life on it—an honourable boy."

He would not stake ten thousand dollars on it, however. He made it plain that he did not have the money to stand Lucian's bail. The collapse of his mills had finished him. He had merely a few hundred dollars in his current account. He'd have to put another mortgage on his house to hire legal counsel for Lucian. Not that he minded doing it. Nothing was too much for the boy. Besides, wasn't it up to Barnabas to furnish the bail? Rather ostentatiously Mr. Pugh fired his butler, and he sold Lucian's Stutz, which proved the boy didn't have anything either. Everything Pugh did, as he trumpeted through the town, proclaimed that if there had been knavery he and his were possessed of no ill-gotten gains.

He saw everyone even remotely connected with the affair. He asked questions innocently, probing with the frank, hurt air of one who simply cannot understand the mechanisms of fraud. Inevitably he also answered questions. No, he knew nothing about the bank bonds, absolutely nothing. He had offered machinery for sale, even tried hard to push the sales, for he needed the money. Yes, he had recommended that Lucian accept certain bids, but always in good faith, sir, always. Since he'd no idea the mills were bonded . . . No, he hadn't received any money for the machinery, hadn't, in fact, known the bids were taken up, for he'd been in Boston, you see. And after all, that sort of thing was the treasurer's affair. He was upset to learn of the Hawkes

brothers plight, wished he could reimburse them. They were not to worry. Everything would be straightened out at the trial—though how could they indict the boy when he was such a fine, clean-cut lad? So on and on, protesting; round and round, bellowing; back and forth, charging, went the indomitable Pugh. And everywhere, somehow, he managed to plant the small seed of doubt: father and son, blood would tell, a bastard in one generation, a thief in the next. There were actually people who had never liked Ezra Pugh who began to feel sorry for him now.

A week before Christmas Lucian was indicted by the grand jury for grand larceny and fraud. His bail was fixed at twenty-five thousand dollars, but no one came forward with the money. Indeed no one offered even the fee for a professional bondsman. Lucian spent Christmas in the Taunton Jail, whiling away the time playing solitaire at which he cheated himself without scruple.

Kitty avoided thinking, talking, or reading about him. That she did not go to the Fall River jail to see him was not surprising, since to do so would have caused gossip. But she did not go to Taunton either. She did not even send him a Christmas card; and the cuff-links she had bought as a Christmas present for him she gave to Barnabas with no thought of irony. She was merely being practical: she had no money to throw away this Christmas. The handkerchiefs she'd bought for Barnabas, she gave to Rafe, along with a rosary and a crucifix for his room. Rafe should be giving more heed to his religion now that troubled times were upon them. He never went to Mass, and when she lectured him on his lack of faith, he would leave the room.

"'Tis as rude as slapping my face," she said to him once.

"I'm sorry, Mother. You're right—it is rude." He kissed her to comfort her. And as always when Kitty reprimanded him, he felt guilty. The old buried guilt of his childhood washed over him in an undisciplined wave. Sometime he must find its cause, name it, and so control it and put it in its place forever. But now, with his mother so edgy, and the mill failing, and Barnabas so ill, he had no time for probing. "It's just not something I want to argue about, Mother. We'd fight over it, and——"

"But Rafe, where can you turn when there's trouble on you, except to God and the true faith?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it's time to start using a little common sense."

"Common sense, is it? Where's the God in common sense? It isn't common sense will save us, but faith in the Lord and his Blessed Saints!"

"Let's pretend, if there is a God, that he has common sense, Mother. Idiocy just isn't appealing. Now let's drop it, can't we?"

"That we can't and the state of your soul in jeopardy. Can't you see the only way we'll get out of the trouble is to pray?"

"The only way we'll get out of it is to think and do the right thing. Now please stop nagging me about it, Mother. We can't solve anything by trying to go back to the Middle Ages."

She wept over his blasphemies, prayed for his salvation, and worried about the state of his soul; all of which took her mind off Lucian and her lost money. Unconsciously she fell back into the old pattern, the dreaming and praying which so often is the design for living of those without hope. She prayed for a fantastic array of good things, and from praying for them slipped insensibly into dreaming that she had them. Barnabas's death, and all the money hers. Rafe making a million dollars. Her Pugh mill stock suddenly soaring in price. Philip's wife dead, and Philip come once more to woo her, his undying love as fresh as in its springtime—and now he had a million dollars. Sometimes when she listened to people talk of the network of evidence closing in around Lucian, or heard Barnabas say the mill was losing money, or saw Philip with his living wife, she dreamed once more, as she had not done since her girlhood, of the haven of a convent and herself in a sombre habit, the bride of Christ, the vessel of infinite Grace.

She began now to look her age. The mottled silver showed in her black hair. She had always been slender; now, when she needed a little roundness, she began to lose weight. Her cheeks became hollow, her neck scrawny, her hands clawlike. When she was dressed in one of the knee-length frocks of the day, and her face was plastered with red and white make-up, she looked gaunt. When she sat before her mirror at bedtime in her nightgown and kimono, massaging a succession of creams and lotions into her face, she looked haggard. Now, as her beauty began to crumble, the stony footprints of her life became slowly visible. Her lips narrowed, and in repose her mouth fell into a bitter line. The deepening furrows on either side of it were sometimes, in the proper light, like downward thrusting scars. As the flesh stretched tighter over it her nose grew beaky. The wrinkles coming now around her eyes made them look smaller, and unless she veiled them with her lashes they seemed to stare and pry and calculate with naked avarice.

She did not see herself in this fashion. Turning before her mirror, she would study her face from different angles, smiling. The creams

and lotions, bottled youth, were miraculous. So powerful was her faith in their magic that each night as she went through the ritual she dreamed herself back into beauty, and in the morning woke still believing it was hers, and that the stare of the cold blue eyes in the mirror was lit by imperiousness, not by greed.

Just before Christmas, old Bridie McCarran returned to take up her residence again at Barnabas's house. She had quarrelled once more with Rosie Hawkes. And this time, she told Kitty, the break was final. "May the devil catch me if I so far forget meself as to go to her wake, though 'tis no harm I'll be wishing her, the Lord forbid, but the saints and all the angels couldn't get on with her and that's the truth. Nag, nag, nag it is, from the morn's light till the dark's dark, and I says to her, 'Rosie,' I says, 'it's in me mind now you nag God in your prayers.' Whine, whine, whine, and will you be telling me what she's got to whine over? Fine clothes to her back, and the children bright as the light in your eyes, and not a thing in this world to want for. So she says to me, not once, mind you, but nag, nag, nag, she says it, 'You'll go no more to the mill, Gramma, 'tis a shame and a disgrace, you being so old and feeble, and no sense in it at all, and do I catch you trying it on me, I'll lock you in, and that's the end of it.' And I says to her, 'So it's the end, me girl, and you never spoke a truer word, for I'll see you and yours climbing the cold hills and burning the valleys of hell itself, may God forgive me, before I'll let me own dear girls that sweat and slave for me go without their dinners.' 'Twas but the beginning, and I'll not trouble you with the course of it, from bad to worse, till I packed me bags, and the devil take me if my shadow falls on her door again, old and feeble though it be. Now dearie, how about a cup of tea? Can you get the water to boiling while I take off me shoes and get into me slippers? For I'll make no pretences to you, Mary darling, me feet are killing me. Shoes ain't what they were in the old days."

There was nothing for it. Gramma had come to stay. With the Olney staff reduced to the aged Mr. and Mrs. O'Hearn, who weren't worth their board, and a woman coming in by the day to clean, Gramma was not going to be a help, but a nuisance. Old as she was, she was still hearty—now. But Kitty could foresee the day when she would decline into one of those long, senile illnesses, with the wandering mind making its eternal vague demands, the aged body helpless. She foresaw palsied hands, blind eyes, toothless gums. She foresaw herself spending what she chose to think of as the best years of her life waiting on a helpless invalid. The spoon-feeding, as of an infant, the frightened cries in the night, cries from the long-dead past snaring the

senile mind, the baths, the bed changing. . . . And it could go on for years, draining her life away, while the hulk on the bed refused to die.

Oh, why did it have to fall on her? Rosie should do it. It wasn't Kitty's *place*. After all, old Bridie wasn't even a blood relation of Kitty McCarran.

But at the moment Gramma was as chipper as a spring robin. Perhaps there was a preservative ingredient in madness. She helped Mrs. O'Hearn, who was always ailing, with the cooking. She swept, dusted, and polished silver with the aid of her wavering Irish songs. She packed her dinners and carried them to the mill. She played cribbage with Barnabas, drank tea with all callers, made cookies for Rafe, sewed on baby flannels for Silence Bess to distribute to the naked children of the unemployed, and still had time to go to six o'clock Mass every morning.

One day in January, two weeks after Lucian had been indicted by the grand jury, Gramma trudged up the stairs to Kitty's room. Kitty was trying to forget her troubles by going over her clothes to see what could be done to revive them; for certainly, unless things took a radical turn for the better, she could not afford new ones for the spring.

"'Tis a caller to see you," said Gramma. "A lady. And you'd best put something fine on, for she's the cream of society, no less."

"Oh. It must be somebody about a soup kitchen or something."

"Can't say. But 'tisn't seemly to leave the poor thing alone. I'll run down and entertain her and on the way slip it to Mrs. O'Hearn to brew us a nice pot of tea."

The idea of Gramma entertaining the cream of society gave Kitty pause. "Did she say what her name is?"

"Oh," said Gramma, leaving the room with a proud, careless toss of her head. "'Tis Mrs. Lucian Olney."

Kitty felt panic, a longing to run somewhere and hide. It was silly, because of course she would be able to handle helpless, ineffectual Adelaide. She quickly changed into a bright dress, fluffed her hair around her face, dabbed on powder and rouge, and went downstairs.

As she crossed the hall, she heard Gramma saying, "Sure, 'tis a pity to see how you've fallen off, Mrs. Olney, but I suppose what with one thing and another, it can't be helped, and there's none of us so young as we were. But as I said just the other day to Mrs. O'Hearn——"

Kitty was ashamed. Oh, what was the use of ever trying to make anything of yourself when you had a stone like Gramma tied around your neck?

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Olney. Oh, don't get up. I'll be quite

comfortable here." She sat down at one end of a Victorian sofa with an air of languid boredom like the vampires in the movies. Lucian had tried to teach Kitty to smoke, but she had learned merely to puff, hating it, yet deriving from it the pleasurable satisfaction of knowing she was wicked. Now she took a cigarette and lit it to torment Adelaide.

But it was Gramma who stared at Kitty in undisguised horror. Adelaide, who sat tearing at the fingers of her black kid gloves, was too indrawn and distraught to notice. Had she noticed, she would not have been shocked, for Adelaide was herself an inveterate but secret smoker. One of the nurses who had cared for her after her abortive suicide attempt had given her cigarettes because she couldn't stand watching Adelaide's despairing hands pick at everything they touched. Now Adelaide spent hours of every day locked in her room drinking rotgut bootleg whisky and chain-smoking. She'd as soon have taken her clothes off in public, however, as to be seen by anyone doing either.

The silence became uncomfortable. Gramma's Boston rocker creaked through it rhythmically. Kitty tried to keep her eyes relentlessly upon Adelaide's face, but she couldn't, perhaps because Adelaide's aimlessly searching glances cut across her own, deflected to some object in the room, glanced back, then, as if in terror, turned toward the rug to hide. Adelaide's was not a face one looked at willingly. It was a hag's face, yellow, creased like a hen's leg with what seemed like dirt caught in the creases. Short, grey hair straggled in a frame around it, and the hair was unevenly cut, as if Adelaide had done it herself in a drunken fit. This ruin—grotesque caricature imposed upon a tormented woman—was ignoble like the ruin of a burned-out tenement. In shrinking the flesh had stretched tight over the skeleton, and Adelaide's ancestors—a long line of graceless people—had cursed her with bad bones. Now, when she tried to smile, her lips drew back against her teeth in a simian grin. Her small eyes revealed in nakedness the animal emotions suited to her apelike skeleton: raw fear, quick apprehension, timidity, dumb pain.

Except to whisper her name to Gramma at the door, she had not said a word. She was dumb with terror, chained by terror to a chair in this foreign house, unentered for years, forbidden, dangerous house, house of the harlot, the bastard, and the lecherous Quaker. Her memories of the house had faded into misty dimness, so that now she felt as if she were trapped in an evil place where she had never been, yet knew it with dreadful psychic familiarity. She looked around the

room with the uneasiness and distrust of the mad. Her glance rested momentarily on Kitty's face, darted timidly away.

Kitty felt growing alarm. The woman was behaving as if she didn't know where she was. The thought crossed Kitty's mind, then fled from its own impossibility: Adelaide might have come here to kill her. She said, "Perhaps you've come on some kind of charity, Mrs. Olney? These days it's one thing after another, from baby clothes to the soup kitchens. But no doubt——"

"I never go out," said Adelaide in a childish voice. "Nobody knows where I am. I *sneaked* out." She giggled.

"And 'tis a pleasure to have you, I'm sure," said Gramma. "'Tis high time you ladies was getting acquainted, the same family and all."

Kitty said, "Would you mind seeing to the tea, Gramma? Mrs. O'Hearn is so slow these days."

"That she is, but in due time she'll bring it, and there's no hurrying her." Gramma sat on, blandly rocking, smiling happily at the two distraught women.

Desperately Kitty tried again. "Did you come about one of the soup kitchens, Mrs. Olney?"

Adelaide twisted her gloves into a knot. "Beg pardon?"

"The charities. For feeding the poor."

Alarm darted into Adelaide's eyes. She felt guilty: she shouldn't have come here. Something very important had driven her to come, but she couldn't remember what it was. "Not about the poor. I came about—I—it's about——" She smiled her ghastly, simian grin. One must always smile at strangers—be sweet, ingratiating, smile. "I never do anything about the poor." Her tone grew bright, sparkling with empty sociability. "They're so dirty and disgusting, aren't they?"

Kitty was shocked at such bald frankness. "I always feel we must do what we can to help."

"Help?" That was what she'd come for—help. Help was money. She'd come to this immoral woman for money. Now she couldn't remember why she needed the money because the conversation had gone wrong, making her forget. She wished she were alone so that she could have a drink and remember.

The horrible silence was once more creeping through the room. Gramma said brightly, "And how's Mr. Lucian bearing up under it all, Mrs. Olney? Such a dear boy. I remember——"

The whole pattern of disaster fell into place in Adelaide's besotted mind. "I came for the money for Lucian. They've put him in jail

and he can't get out because no one will give him the money. I begged Mama and Papa, and you know, I can't find a thing to sell myself. I thought I had some jewellery, but it turns out——" Her voice trailed away. She was puzzled about the jewellery. She'd sold it piece by piece to buy liquor, but she still looked for it every time she needed more liquor. Painful, sodden, fumbling searches, which, if they did not turn up the jewellery, sometimes uncovered a hidden bottle. But now only money would do. She began to cry, the slow despairing tears of the alcoholic.

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," whispered Gramma, in acute dismay at this revelation of Society's frailty.

Kitty said, "It's a terrible thing, Mrs. Olney, but it wouldn't make him feel better to know you were crying, now would it?"

Adelaide's drunken tears, once started, had a life of their own. They would flow on through talk and muddled action, through eating and more drinking, through dark plots and wistful dreams. Now, as they ran down her sunken cheeks, she shot a cunning sharp glance at Kitty. "But of course it would!" She laughed softly, although she was crying. "Lucian likes to make me cry. He thinks of ways. He always did."

At this inopportune moment Mrs. O'Hearn shambled in with the tea. In tearful contemplation, Adelaide watched her clumsy movements. Then, as if compelled to debase them all, she said clearly, "Didn't he make you cry, too? Laugh at you to make you cry?"

Mrs. O'Hearn, who loathed Kitty, had the satisfaction of seeing her face turn blotchy red under the rouge. "Will that be all, mum?"

"Yes, thank you."

Mrs. O'Hearn shuffled out, dragging her feet, managing by emanation to convey her black opinions: grand-ladyish, uppity, and her nothing but a common whore. Tomorrow was her day off, and she'd have a thing or two to tell around, that she would.

Kitty poured the tea and carried a cup to her guest. "This will make you feel better, Mrs. Olney."

"'Tis the best English Breakfast," said Gramma. "I mayn't know much, but I know me teas. Now drink it up like a good girl, dearie. It'll put heart in ye."

Kitty stood over Adelaide, offering her cookies. Adelaide looked up at her, a childlike hope on her ravaged face. "You're going to give me the money, aren't you? It's only twenty-five thousand dollars, and all the time you've loved him, you have to help him now, don't you?"



Kitty offered Gramma the cookies. "I don't understand you, Mrs. Olney. I think you're a bit confused, with your trouble and all. Mr. Lucian Olney has no claim on me, nor I on him, in a human way of speaking. It wouldn't be decent not to say I'm sorry he's in jail, but since he stole the money——"

Adelaide jumped to her feet. Her cup and saucer fell, spilling tea down the front of her dress. She stepped forward uncertainly, grinding a cookie into the rug. "He never stole anything! You're a wicked liar! He never stole! He never!" She clenched her fists and beat them against her sides in an infantile gesture of futile rage. "You'd sleep with him and have his son, you'd let him keep you for years and years, but when he's suffering you wouldn't give him money, you damned miser, you wouldn't——"

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph," whispered Gramma, crossing herself.

Kitty felt as if she were going to faint. "How did you know? Who told you?"

Adelaide broke into hysterical laughter. "He did! He told me over and over to make me cry. He *liked* to tell me. He——" It was ghastly to watch her body and face contorted as she laughed and cried; as, parting the veils of drunken despair, she exposed the years of agony she had lived through since Lucian had lost all her money, and with it any use he had ever had for Adelaide. Her laughter broke in one wild peal, and nothing was left but the sobs that racked her. She sank in a huddle on to the floor. "Lucian! Lucian! Oh, my God, my God. I'd die for him! Lucian!" The sobs subsided into a maudlin whimper. "Nobody loves him but me. Nobody in all the whole world loves him——only me——"

Kitty tried to lift her up, but Adelaide went heavy and limp like a stubborn child. "What am I going to do, Gramma? Help me, can't you? What am I going to do with her?"

But Gramma had dredged her beads from her pocket, and now was rocking furiously back and forth, clicking off her prayers in a frightened mumble.

"Please get up, Mrs. Olney. If you'd drink a cup of tea——"

Adelaide twisted her arm around the leg of a heavy chair. Evidently she was experienced at this sort of thing, for she leered up at Kitty, chuckling softly, "Try to make me, would you, you old bat!"

"Holy Mother of God, Gramma, she's out of her mind!"

"Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee—— She's drunk, dearie. Don't you know a drunk when you see one?—among women, and the fruit—— And her so rich and grand and all and all! Ochone, 'tis

the tears of the Lord Himself fall down on us this day for our sins, have mercy on us!—of Thy womb, Jesus——”

Kitty left the room, shutting the door and for a moment leaning weakly against it. She felt a strong, irrational impulse to lock it, to lock all her troubles into one room and walk away from them forever. Instead she went to the telephone and called Barnabas. He was not at the mill.

For a black moment she thought she would have to call Grace Pugh. She had a hideous vision of that indomitable hulk of righteousness stalking into her parlour, laying her low with a glance. Then, with a surge of relief, she remembered Silence Bess. She poured out her distraught tale over the telephone. “You have to come, Miss Bess! Take a cab, do anything—only for God’s sake come right away!”

Silence got there in twenty minutes. She poured medicinal brandy down Adelaide’s throat, bathed her face with water from the tea tray, straightened her hat, retrieved her gloves, and finally got her to her feet, out of the house, and into a cab.

She took Adelaide home with her, put her to bed, and then called Grace Pugh. She said she’d picked Adelaide up, dead drunk in public, letting Grace infer that her daughter had been rolling in a gutter in the centre of town. “I’ve got her quiet now, and she may as well stay here till she’s better. No use you coming for her tonight, because I shan’t wake her on any account. Goodbye.”

In the face of such efficiency, even Grace gave way. Thus it was that Silence Bess became involved in a new cause—the cause of saving Lucian Olney from injustice.

## PART NINE

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### The Market Price

At the end of January, 1928, Barnabas closed his mill, unable to meet another payroll. He and Rafe stood at the dingy window of the office, watching the weavers and spinners trudge home through the mucky gravel of the millyard, their last pay envelopes clutched in their hands.

"It would be raining on the last day," said Barnabas. "Poor devils. What did I do wrong to let them down like this at the end?"

There was no answer to that. Rafe turned back to his desk, heaped with ledgers and papers, the debris of Barnabas's last quixotic stand. Five million dollars had vanished, fed into a gesture of integrity. There in the books was the tale of its passing, damned expensive red ink. He began to put the ledgers away in the safe. Tidying up the tomb, he thought—leave it neat for the ghosts. He said, "Now you can rest. It's high time."

"I doubt if I know how. There goes Sam Disney. He was born the same day and year I was. Three generations of his family have worked in this mill. I wonder what he'll do now." He turned from the window and looked across the desk at Rafe kneeling on the floor before the safe, his back to Barnabas. Barnabas felt one of those rare outpourings of love, when the whole being seems to dissolve and flow toward another being and nothing is left but the aching longing for annihilation: to give forever, past rescinding, the impossible gift—one's self, even down to one's tired soul.

"Are you going to look back some day and blame me for this? Hold it against me?"

Rafe turned toward him and smiled. "I can't tell, of course. Now I don't think so. I know we're supposed not to want anything except money. To say you don't really care much about it, or to say there are other things you value more—that's an awful heresy. And of course you don't say it because no one would believe you, and it sounds so false—sort of like whistling in the dark. You know? So then you wonder if you really believe it yourself. Right now, I think

I'm a little bored with money. And a little scared of it, maybe. You see, all my life I've heard so much about it. First Mother and then the mill—all this. Money was always awfully important to my mother."

"Don't blame her for that," said Barnabas gently. "She has had a most unhappy life. The world can do such things to people—such cruel things. It has a way of telling us, over and over, that there's nothing in ourselves to respect. And finally it makes some of us, like your mother, believe that. Then there's nothing to do but find something outside ourselves to love—something like money."

"It isn't the world that does that to us. It's other men."

"Ah—but what is the world, except other men? Rafe, have you any plans for earning a living?"

"Nothing very definite. With everything gone to pot, it will take some doing to find a job, won't it?"

"You could go South," said Barnabas cautiously. "They must need managers down there, expanding as they are."

"I don't think so." In no circumstances would Rafe leave Barnabas now, and of course they both knew it. "I'd be just as happy if I never saw another mill."

"Let's go home," said Barnabas. "We can clean this up later."

As they walked down the bare, wooden stair with its treads worn into hollows, each step echoed through the corridors, hollow, lonely echoes that made Rafe feel like an interloper. They should get out quickly, leaving the place to silence and to dust. He said, "There's one thing good about it. We've struck bottom. Everything's gone. I feel as if I'd hit a spot in my life when I'm really free. I can make any choice, go in any one of a hundred directions."

"I'm glad. I never had such a moment in my life." Neither noticed that Barnabas spoke as if his life was over, as if, from this striking bottom, there could be no recovery for him.

Having consummated their grand quixotic gesture and deliberately lost everything their world held valuable, they became temporarily godlike. They ignored the possibility that they, too, like the sad weavers and spinners they had watched departing across the muddy courtyard, might suffer innocently, gratuitously, from acts not of their own making.

They had become poor too suddenly. The armour of wealth was gone, but they had worn it so long that they still felt the weight of its sublime security pressing upon their bones. Perhaps it is impossible for a rich American to learn that destiny is not a business proposition which he can manage. Barnabas's sorrows had all been polite:

problems he could solve or endure as arbitrarily (so long as he had the money) as he had thrown five million dollars into the maw of his collapsing mill. Now he must get down to cases and learn what all his weavers and spinners had been born knowing: that sometimes life strongly resembles a puppet show, and that being one of the puppets does not entitle one to know the plot.

The sodden January rain gave way to bitter frost, the kind of inexorable cold that is unusual in Fall River, almost completely surrounded as it is with water. On February second a high wind rose, shrieking around the tenements with frigid glee. Barnabas worried about his laid-off help, who probably had no coal. He went down to the mill and had the old bell rung at the unprecedented hour of ten. When the people assembled in the yard, their faces alight with the hope that he was keeping the mill open after all, he told them they could have the mill's coal if they would carry it away. He and Rafe had to stay the rest of the day, lest quarrels break out, and to see that the women got their share.

By the time he reached home at four o'clock, Barnabas was exhausted from standing all day in the cold. He was filthy with coal dust, and even the marrow of his bones felt frozen. Rafe made him drink some brandy, take a warm bath, and eat a light supper from a tray before his library fire.

"I've never felt so snug and comfortable," said Barnabas drowsily. "It's the contrast, of course. I'd as soon not go out again for a week."

"No reason why you should. I can clean up the office. Do you want something to read? Or would you rather play chess?"

"Chess, if you don't mind." Barnabas lifted his head suddenly. "What was that?"

"Just a fire engine." Rafe pulled the chess table up to the hearth. "I hope Gramma doesn't hear it."

They sat nodding over their game, unaware of things that did not concern them, such as the dismantling of the old Pocasset Mill in the centre of town. Just as they had spent the day freezing in a coal shed, so had workmen spent the day freezing in the Pocasset; until in desperation to get warm, they had lit a salamander, setting it on the oil-soaked floor. They'd put the fire out before they went home, or they thought they had. No one in his right mind leaves a fire burning in an abandoned mill. But the high wind sent strong draughts through the cavernous rooms. All it needed was a half-dead ember, the oily floors, and everyone gone home to supper to transform the cold into inferno.

Barnabas moved his queen to the place of the king's pawn. "It must be a bad fire. That's the third engine I've heard."

"Sure you want to swap her for my knight? If you do, I can mate you in three moves."

"Oh, so you can." Barnabas pushed the chess table away. "Rafe, forgive me for this personal question. But don't you think you should have a sweetheart?"

Rafe laughed. "Yes, I do. Have you lined one up for me?"

"Well, no. I merely thought—you'll be twenty-five in a few days. Since you've been home, you've spent most of your time with me. I'm not sure that's good. I was married when I was twenty. Young marriages are best. This waiting——"

"You had the one essential ingredient—the girl."

"Yes. But if you went around with young people——"

"Um. And when I find her I can sing: 'I'm a man of property. Money, I despise it, many people prize it——'. Honestly, don't you think I'd better look for a job first?"

They heard the urgent clanging of another fire engine. "Perhaps you should. Have you thought of anything in particular yet?"

"No. I'll get things straightened up at the mill first." A shy black shadow crept by the door. Rafe saw it from the corner of his eye and leaped to his feet. "Gramma! Where are you going?"

"Now don't you worry, Rafe, darling. I'm just going out to see where my girls have got to. They've been calling, calling, and Tim's that tired I can't get him to budge from the bed. Now wouldn't you think——"

"Come in and sit with me, Mrs. McCarran," said Barnabas. "Rafe will go look for them."

Gramma slipped diffidently into the room, as if she knew she had no business in so grand a place. When she had a bad spell she always reverted to humility; and she was bad tonight, or she would not have mentioned Tim.

Rafe went out, ostentatiously opening and closing the front door. To his surprise, he found other people in the street and on their porches, all staring into the south-west at the bright disaster. The whole sky was an orange glow. Streaks of sparks and flaming cinders blew up, bent to the east, spread out on the wind, and drove across the sky like comets' tails. From these swaths of fire, separate glowing atoms detached themselves and fell in arcs of red grandeur. They must have been large chunks of burning matter to be visible at such a distance as separate falling stars.

A man standing on the next porch called across the street to another man, "Think we ought to go down? Try to help?"

The other called back, "Don't know what we can do. They're getting help from Taunton and Providence."

Suddenly a great fountain of flames and sparks shot into the sky. A moment later Rafe heard the sound of it, a dull reverberation, as of a building falling or something exploding. A woman ran out of another house, screaming, "The whole Centre's going! The sparks have jumped the street!"

A knot of people stood in the middle of the road. From among them a voice cried, "All those wooden shells on Pleasant Street—My God! If the wind don't change it'll sweep right up to the Flint!"

Standing apart from the others was a fat woman in a black shawl—someone's servant. She rocked her body back and forth, keening, wringing her hands. She seemed like a figure in an old picture, bowed in the immemorial despair of the peasant called to look upon disaster. She moaned her keening prayers, and her words carried above all the other shouts and cries, for they were the eternal wail of the submissive, voicing the anguish of the meek. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, have mercy on us poor sinners! Ochone, Ochone, 'tis the end of the world, put to fire and sword, the devil take it, and all God's good works come to naught. That I should live to see this day, and me soul unshriven! Holy Mary, Mother of God, have mercy——"

The cold air shivered, rent by the screams of sirens. The people in the street scattered like blown leaves. Then the red dragons of the Taunton fire department, shrieking, clanging, roared down Rock Street. The rubber-clad firemen clung like black leeches to the streaking red trucks. They must have sent everything: every hose, ladder, hatchet, and pump—even an antiquated old engine with a shiny brass superstructure that gleamed with a flirtatious smile in the light of the burning city. Peace followed their passing, an excruciating silence that hurt the ears.

Rafe thought of Gramma. This would drive her wild. He went back into the house, wondering how all these people knew everything when he knew nothing. They must have radios. His mother was talking on the telephone when he stepped back into the hall.

"But Miss Bess, I can't. Gramma's wild—I can't leave her. Oh, I can do that, sure. I'll stack them in the front hall and you can take my car—Minerva or somebody can drive you."

She cast a look of dark woe at Rafe over the telephone. When she hung up she said, "That was Miss Bess. She wants all our sheets and

blankets, and buckets of coffee. Look, dear, will you go and ask Mrs. O'Hearn to make up all the coffee in the house?"

Rafe said, "Get Gramma to help you with the blankets—take her mind off herself."

The telephone rang again and he picked up the receiver. "Yes?"

It was the superintendent of the mill. "Mr. Olney? Oh, Rafe—no, don't get him, there isn't time. The sparks are driving toward the mill. If they catch the roofs, we're done for. I'm rounding up help to go down there—maybe we can beat 'em out."

Rafe said, "I'll be right down." He saw Barnabas standing in the doorway, listening. "See if you can get some firemen, will you? It's going to be tough to get water up to the roofs."

"Are you crazy, Rafe? The whole Centre's burning—nobody's going to help us—got to do it ourselves. Boston's sending down everything they can spare, but it'll be another hour before they can get here."

Rafe felt stupefied, as one does when he begins to grasp the full magnitude of a great disaster. "Where are you, Frank?"

"At the mill. I've turned the humidifier system on. I found some of our people in the street, and I've sent them to round up everyone they can. Then I called you. I thought maybe soon we wouldn't be able to get a 'phone connection."

"Shall I bring some warm clothes for the men? In this wind on the roof——"

A rude guffaw came over the wire. "Listen, Rafe. It's like the bottom of hell down here. It's a hundred and four in the office. Be worse on the roofs, with that wind coming at us right out of the furnace."

"But you're blocks from the Centre!"

"Well, that's closer than Pompeii was when it went out!" The superintendent hung up.

"That was Frank," said Rafe stupidly to Barnabas. "I'm going down there. He's afraid the mill——"

Barnabas pulled off his dressing-gown and reached for his coat. "I'm going with you."

"No. We can handle it. He's rounding up help—turned the humidifiers on——"

"Let's go," said Barnabas.

Afterwards Rafe told himself that he'd have stopped Barnabas from going, some way, if he'd known how gruelling hard, how inhumanly awful, it was going to be. He didn't believe the superintendent's



story of the heat; not when his bare hands froze to the steering wheel. He didn't believe it was impossible to get firemen, an engine or two, to spray the roofs with water. Good Lord, the mill was enormous, five vast buildings, big as prisons. And important. The Olneys were important. If Barnabas called the fire chief he'd send some men over. At the corner of Bedford Street, Rafe had to stop and wait while the New Bedford fire department clanged past. Even then he actually thought all that Barnabas would have to do was stand around, telephone a few people, give a few orders.

"Put the car in the yard," said Barnabas. "The firemen may need the street."

As they parked the car, the engines from Fairhaven, Westport, and the familiar antique from Westport Harbor screamed by. They stopped a block farther on, as close to the fire as they could get.

Barnabas opened the car door, and the heat struck them. He shrank back against Rafe, catching his breath. In the clear, golden firelight Rafe seemed to see every wrinkle of his face, every separate white hair of his head, even the blue veins on the back of his hands. This clarity of vision caused in him a sudden violent longing to cherish Barnabas, to protect him from all this. He felt competent, knowing the strength of his young body, and he felt mature. Barnabas was weak, and in this situation helpless. This was a thing like war, where the old should not meddle.

"I'm going to take you back home," he said.

But Barnabas was taking off his overcoat and suit jacket. He threw them into the car and drew great breaths of the hot, reeking air into his lungs to get used to it. He started to walk across the yard, and there was nothing Rafe could do but follow him. As they passed the mill gate a mammoth engine from Providence slowly turned the corner and edged down the street. In their shirt sleeves, bracing their bodies against the roaring wind that came straight from the heart of the fire, Barnabas and Rafe watched the engine park before their Number 2 mill. The men swarmed down from it, working with their hose, fastening it to the hydrant. The pressure was low.

A towering, rubber-clad man came toward them. Under his hat his face was red, streaming with sweat. He shouted, "You got water on in that mill?"

"Yes," said Rafe. "The humidifier."

"Get it off, quick."

Rafe wanted to argue. A chunk of burning wood as big as his fist fell from the sky between himself and the fireman. They both looked

down at it. The fireman said wearily, "Jesus Christ. All the same, turn it off. We gotta have water."

"And what'll we use?" said Rafe.

"I dunno. You see," said the man gently, "down there it's burning, and here it ain't." He rejoined his men, lifting his share of the hose and trotting with it down the street, keeping neatly to his spot in the line. It was all weirdly neat, this discipline in the fiery furnace; like a snatch of nightmare, caught in passing from one terror to the next.

An engine from Newport turned the corner, cruising, looking for a hydrant. The street was clogged with engines, red cars of fire chiefs, hook and ladders. Barnabas stared into the fire. "It must be up to Third Street." He rubbed his hand across his eyes. "It hurts to look into it." His tone was submissive, and he smiled timidly, as if trying to apologize for all this, for everything.

Rafe said, "We must go turn off the water."

They walked because Rafe did not want Barnabas to run. It struck him as odd that Frank hadn't turned the lights on in the mill: the windows stared, black, into the glare of the nightmare world, reflecting the shifting flickers of the sort of light that lived in the heart of the sun. He looked up to see if there were really sparks flying on to the roofs. The sky was orange. Somewhere there was a moon almost full, but he could not find it. It was gone, like a pearl thrown into a cauldron.

There were men and women in the mill, more, it seemed, moving around the still machinery than when the mill was working. Rafe was surprised to see women: perhaps they had come for the excitement. They were all busy, working methodically under the direction of the foremen. They were collecting buckets, anything that would hold water, and sacks, cloth, anything to beat out sparks. They had a bucket brigade working to send up water to the roof. Women and children kept coming into the spinning-room with more buckets and pans, brought from their homes. After Rafe turned off the humidifiers and gave orders to have it done in the other buildings, he and Barnabas walked up the stairs past the bucket brigade. The electric power was gone and consequently the freight elevators did not work.

Men stripped to their drawers worked on the roof, incongruous gnomes beating out the falling stars. Where one wore trousers, he appeared indecently well-dressed, like a banker caught inadvertently in hell; he wore them not to press a social claim, but because his poverty did not permit underpants. Those who wore long johns had the legs rolled up and the tops slipped down, the sleeves tied around

their waists like the ends of a sarong. They'd all kept their shoes, which now showed in that merciless light their broken sad condition. Rafe's shoes were stout, thick-soled, but through them he felt the burning heat of the tar and gravel. It squashed when he stepped on it and blistered up in bubbles.

They were on the roof of Number 5, the newest mill. On the other four roofs there also danced naked striving gnomes. Someone shoved a wet sack into Rafe's hands. He swung it, bent, and beat out his first spark, which was not a spark, but a piece of flaming kindling. He stood up, and on the roof of Number 4 another man bent to his spark and rose again. It was as if they'd bowed to each other formally, partners in a minuet danced across a chasm of inferno.

Rafe took off his shirt and trousers, wet with his sweat, and he felt the hot wind on his bare body. He threw his clothes back down the stair well, and he saw that Barnabas had done the same. They were all unclothed together now, fighting in the democracy of disaster.

It would have been a fine thing to have stood there, with binoculars perhaps, like a general on a distant hill, and watch the heart of the city burn. Each time Rafe rose to swing his sack again he looked down into the volcano, and each time it seemed to have swallowed another bite of the town; until he had the sensation of flickering orange behind his eyes; until he forgot the meaning of darkness, cool sweet nights and misty dawns; until he came to think, as hour pressed on agonizing hour, that this was normal, this view of hell, this living in the heart of the sun, this imp-like chasing of the falling brands. He lost count of time. This had been going on forever, his body bending, beating, straightening, bowing to the fire like an ancient worshipper who knew the meaning of elemental things. His body fought to stand upright in the wind, fought against the backdraught from the fire which he felt as something alive, maliciously longing to suck him through the air across the intervening distance, magically, into the volcano. By midnight he was nothing but a body, an animal clutching at a wet sack, bending, beating, straightening, and doing this in denial of all rest, forever. Years poured through the funnel of that night; later, when he thought again, he understood that a spasm of endurance in hell would be enough, synonymous with eternity; eternity, in these cases, being merely a point of view.

There was also the noise that varied on its themes, destruction playing symphonies. The pumps, breathing like rhythmic drums; the roar, flames roaring, wind roaring, steam roaring, hissing, and roaring again; the great reverberating booms as walls crashed to earth, sending

their fountains of fire up into the greedy wind; the ping, mighty like the plucked harp string of an ancient god, when a pole went down and the high voltage wires sang wickedly, loose in the air; the sighing wrench when a girder ripped and twisted itself in white-hot writhing; the sirens, screaming through every tone and nuance like woodwinds gone berserk. When in that *Götterdämmerung*, one heard a human shout, it sounded paltry, as if men had no place in that feast of fire and must be brushed aside, once and for all, they and their immortal souls. What was a human shout? Frail pretence, an accident of breath, assertion of the pulse-beat life imprisoned on an island in the universe. Bow your backs, men, and beat in anguish to kill the beautiful falling stars, and shout, if you would so expend your breath. It does not matter in what spirit one bows to the fireworks, for in just such a spectacle as this the earth was born, and in just such another it will die. Any genuflection, then, may be construed an act of reverence.

Rafe did not think these things. They were a knowledge of the awful burned into his brain by the orange light. That night, as he fought it with all his strength and will, Rafe crawled into the soul of fire and learned it from the heart outward. He lived fire, as the poet lives his poem, the saint his god, the lover his love. So deep was his absorption that he knew nothing of the other men around him. He lost Barnabas. A chunk of burning wood drove hard against his shoulder, and he turned and beat it out impersonally, not feeling the wound. For a long while he had expected to be burned. It would not have been right to go home from this without a scar.

At last, as the sense of dawn came somehow through the reek of the fire, the wind changed. Without warning it blew suddenly cold upon them from the east, turning back the sparks into the fire, turning back the fire upon itself. The two equals, wind and fire, the mighty elemental warriors which all that night had been allies, turned upon each other with the dawn and fought, spitting and clawing. Rafe stood in the icy blasts, shivering in the cold of his freezing sweat, and watched the flames rear up around the charred skeleton of the town, straight up toward the moon that hung now faintly visible in the yellow sky. Then they bent to the west, hissing in dying fury, finding no food.

Everything looked sick: black bones of buildings, glowing rubble, dirty yellow sky, smoke, stinking, rolling and rolling toward the west, ice—great falls of ice—congealing on the burned-out walls. Rafe dropped the wet sack on the roof. He turned wearily to the weaver who stood next to him, and without pretence, like a tired child, he said, "Where is my father?"

"Somebody took him downstairs. He gave out. This is no sort of shindig for an old man."

Rafe left the roof. He looked for his shirt and trousers on the stairs, but he couldn't find them. It occurred to him as he worked his way down, clinging to the banister, that they'd fought all night to save a mill that didn't belong to any of them. It belonged to the bank, mortgaged for more than it was worth, more than they could ever pay. If they hadn't been so damned heroic, beating their bloody hearts out up there, it would have burned. And the insurance would have made everybody happy. And on top of it all, like a last laugh, somebody had stolen his pants.

He found Barnabas in the office, submitted to first-aid for his burned shoulder, borrowed a raincoat from Frank so that he could get out to the car with some semblance of decency. Then he put his overcoat on and drove himself and Barnabas home by instinct, for he was too tired to see where he was going.

Rafe and Barnabas both slept for almost twenty-four hours. But Ezra Pugh was up bright and early to look at the devastation. He perambulated all around the edges, chatting amiably with the firemen who still worked over the smouldering ruins. He was worried about his safe-deposit box, for his bank had burned to the ground. But once he assured himself that the vaults in the basement were undamaged, he let himself go with pompous sociability to all and sundry in a very democratic fashion. He met Lawyer Philpott in front of Smith's drugstore. Philpott clucked at him, "Pretty bad, eh? Millions of dollars damage. No lives lost, though, or not that I've heard of. But millions of dollars damage."

Ezra Pugh surveyed the ruin benignly. And he murmured one of the texts in the creed of waste, "Um. Be awfully good for business though, all that rebuilding."

2

Although it had been no concern of hers, the fire sent out trivial repercussions, little spiteful blows, that affected Kitty. First, Silence Bess never managed to return all the blankets and other things Kitty had lent her to succour the injured and homeless. Most of the injured were firemen who were cared for professionally. There were no homeless, since only business property had burned. Nevertheless, half the blankets had disappeared, stolen no doubt, and it was extremely annoying.

Rafe's burn was bad, and it became infected, which made him cross, very difficult to get along with.

The O'Hearns used the whole thing as an excuse to get out of doing their work.

And Gramma had disappeared. She had wandered from the house when Kitty wasn't looking, and the saints only knew what had become of her. Finally, three days after the fire, the police found her in the Flint. They brought her home, a meek, wasted shadow, and she sat in the Boston rocker in the living-room, staring at Kitty and Rafe as if she'd never before seen them. She wouldn't speak a word, but when Kitty brought her tea, she drank it, repeating all the mannerism she had always brought to this ritual act, but dully, mechanically. She stuck out her little finger, blew on the tea, stirred it, held the cup daintily and sipped with pursed lips, all in the same instinctive way that a dog turns round and round in one spot before it lies down. In all this there was something designed to break the heart of the beholder. It was as if the spring which made the little actions possible had broken, yet they performed themselves all the same, but now without motive or meaning. Rafe had the uncanny sense that Gramma herself had gone away, leaving these habits behind, as the dead leave their shoes lined neatly in the closet with the scars of many footsteps on them.

They helped her up to her room, and Kitty undressed her and put her to bed. Gramma submitted to all this, and then lay, without sound or protest, staring at the ceiling. Rafe waited in the hall, and when Kitty came from the room her face was tight with annoyance. She said, "I don't know what we'll do with her. She's quite out of her mind now. She should have been in a nice home years ago. Now she'll have to go."

"Why?"

"Why? Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I can't be caring for her, running up and down stairs all the day! And her out of her mind!"

He listened with dull horror. They were walking down the stairs, and Kitty's high heels clicked efficiently on the polished treads. He touched her to make her stop and turn toward him. "Don't you care at all? Don't you *want* to help Gramma?"

There was a stained-glass window at the landing. The coloured light, bright and broken, fell upon her face, making it look carved, impersonal, like a church icon. Her glance slipped evasively from Rafe's face. "But we have to think of what's best for her. Besides, it's not as if she was really related to me, is it? Rosie should——. Don't squeeze my arm like that. You're hurting me."

"Mother, listen. Don't you *love* Gramma?"

She twisted her arm free and clicked down the remaining stairs. "Sure I'm very fond of her," she said crisply over her shoulder.

He went back and sat beside Gramma, feeling desolate. He took her hand; passive, she let him hold it. He thought it important that Gramma should not feel alone, but of course if she were really crazy. . . . His mind kept saying over and over, "Poor Gramma, poor Gramma," like a hinge creaking in a sad wind. It was important to understand Gramma, to know with assurance that she was not merely a colony of wasted cells, or a machine that had run down. She was *Gramma*, who long ago had told him of the Kings of Old, and who had taken his hand and led him through the mills in search of ghosts.

In the dark world of his childhood she had loved him. His fingers curled around her hand, so listless, dry, with its papery skin and hard old bones. He felt young and helpless. Inside, lost behind the barriers of the man, wept the child he once had been.

He did not know that what he saw was not madness, but grief. For the first time in forty years, Gramma was sane. She had stood on the fringes of the fire, her arms outstretched, screaming. She had thought she saw her daughters jump from the black arch of a ruined wall and fly like burning angels into the flames. She saw them die again, and now it was no use to pack the dinners and carry them to the mill. Now, with the ghosts laid, there was nothing to live for, and Gramma stared at the ceiling, as if that blank expanse were all reality. He mourned her madness with mistaken sorrow. What should have caused his inward weeping was her sanity.

Five days after Gramma came home, Barnabas had another heart attack. It gripped him on the stairs as he was going up to bed. His body bent double, and blindly he reached for the banister to keep himself from falling, but in doing so he lost his balance. He fell to the bottom of the stairs, breaking his leg. The doctor told Kitty this was perhaps not an unmitigated disaster. "At least he'll have to rest now. He'll have no excuse to kill himself putting out fires—for a while, anyhow."

"He'll get well, then?"

The doctor heard no overtones in the question, read no doubtful suggestion into it. "No, Mrs. Olney. He'll never be well again. He's always worked too hard and worried too much. He'll do it again as soon as he gets the chance. He can be careful just so long as nothing bites into his conscience, forcing him to do something. Then it's all up. It's too much to expect a man to change his character at seventy."

"But he never does anything! Never goes out, or drinks, or quarrels with people, or——"

"He quarrels with his conscience. And once a man begins that war, he'll find a way to let it kill him in the end. Meanwhile—we'll keep him in the hospital a few weeks, and when he gets home, see that nothing worries him. He should retire, take a long cruise perhaps, or go live in the country. He's made his fortune, Mrs. Olney. He can afford to rest now."

Kitty went home, feeling old, discouraged. Twice in a week release had come close, tantalizing her. She sat at her dressing-table, smearing the youth creams on her face, though the saints alone knew why. What difference how she looked, if she was to spend the rest of her life waiting hand and foot on two old people, one crazy and the other bedridden? It was a lot of punishment to have to take for her small sins. It wasn't as if she'd ever been really wicked. After all, she might have become a whore; she might have had an abortion; she might have smothered Rafe in his cradle; she might—God forgive her for even thinking it—have turned her back on the Church.

She climbed into bed wearily. Defensively her mind began to make invidious comparisons: her sins measured against other people's sins. Rafe, with his heretical heart, his head stuffed full of devilish knowledge. Rubashevski, Philip, Andrew, driving people to the wall and getting rich on the misfortunes of others. Lucian, a liar and a thief. Barnabas—she remembered she hadn't said her prayers. She fumbled in the drawer of the night table for her rosary and fell asleep piously clicking her beads.

When Barnabas began to feel better he flatly refused to remain in the hospital. No one but Rafe understood why. Rafe did not know the exact amount of Barnabas's bank balance, but he suspected it was not more than a few thousand dollars. Before his attack Barnabas had worried because he had nothing with which to reward the men who'd helped to save the mill. There were a few dozen bales of cotton left in the shed. On the day of his attack Barnabas had sold them and divided the money, pathetically inadequate, among the hands. "An insulting gift," he'd called it, to throw in the faces of men who'd sweated through the night to save his property. Possibly there was enough cash to last till the end of the year, with economy, but nothing over for luxuries like hospital bills.

The doctor finally gave in, against his better judgment. "You'll have to get a nurse, though," he told Rafe.



"If he wants one. But there's myself and my mother and the O'Hearns——"

"This is no job for an amateur. A full-time nurse, or he stays here."

Barnabas was happier at home, in spite of the nurse. Her presence made one thing possible, at least: Rafe was free to look for a job so that he could pay her wages.

3

ON a blustery March night Rafe rang Philip Hawkes's doorbell. A pretty girl, strange to him, opened the door. For a moment he stared at her, thinking that she didn't look like a Fall River girl. She wore a white woollen dress with a high, banded neckline trimmed with embroidery like a Russian smock. Her hair was long, brushed smoothly back from a broad serene brow and caught at her neck in a simple knot. This in itself was enough to make her look extraordinary, like a fashion plate of other days. Rafe had grown so accustomed to the shingled head that smooth hair, shining like rubbed copper in the hall light, seemed unnatural; not exactly wrong, perhaps, but very odd. The girl had brown, Oriental-looking eyes, almost almond-shaped; long lashes, smudgy like his mother's, as if a sooty finger had put them there. Her cheekbones were a little high and broad, and her mouth was broad, smiling at him with generous frankness. She had a book in her hand, her finger marking her place.

"I'd like to see Mr. Hawkes, please." He felt awkward, shy. He felt that he towered over her, loutish.

"You're Rafe McCarran, aren't you?" He flushed; his name was Olney now, but he had not got used to it. He was embarrassed when someone spoke his old name, more embarrassed when someone spoke his new one. She said, "Please come inside. I'm Miriam Hawkes. Father and Mother went to Providence this afternoon, and I'm sure they'll be back any minute now. Would you like to wait?"

He followed her into the living-room. She had a lithe walk, quiet. It made him think of Indians walking over moss. He was used to the jouncing of women in high heels. He wondered why he'd never seen her before. He'd remember if he had, for she was different enough to remember, with her low-heeled shoes, long hair, and the stillness about her. She sat down in a big chair before the fire and laid her book face down on a table.

He said, "I never saw you before. How did you know me?"

"Oh, everyone knows you. And I've heard lots of people talk of you—Aunt Minerva, Gramma, my Uncle Andrew."

"But why haven't I seen you around?"

"I was born in Lowell, you know, and we lived there a long while. And I suppose you were always away at school after we moved here. And then——" She smiled. "I was only a little girl most of the time you were growing up. Even if you'd seen me, you wouldn't have noticed."

"I maintain I should have." He wondered what sort of line one used with a girl like this. None of the glib patter of his college days seemed suitable. He could not imagine saying to her, "How about a little nip, baby, while we're waiting?" And pulling a flask from his hip pocket, and her taking a swig of the warm raw stuff with dutiful enjoyment. She wasn't a speakeasy kind of girl. Old-fashioned, that's what she was, old-fashioned. He was surprised to come to this conclusion, for at college to label a girl old-fashioned was serious, like discovering that she had leprosy, and about as rare. Yet here she was, actually capitalizing on this heinous defect, actually daring to stand in the path of progress and mock that sacred cow. For there was no getting around it: she was luscious. With an old-fashioned, primitive yearning, he wanted to possess her. Not just to take her out in a car and neck with her in the abortive manner of the times, but—queer, his feeling like that, and so nakedly; because virginity was another of the sacred cows, for all that youth was reported, in the newspapers, to be flaming. He tried not to look at her directly, lest his eyes betray what he was thinking and feeling.

He said, "What are you reading?"

"*Main Street*. I started it because I thought I ought to, but now I'm well into it, and I really like it. It's awfully plain writing. Not like—well, *literature*. But he says such sharp things; after a while you get used to it, and you almost forget you're reading a book."

"What's it about?"

"Oh—people like us, I suppose. Just ordinary people in a small town in the midwest."

"Doesn't sound like much to make a book about."

"No, it really doesn't. But—after you get used to its being so different, you get interested. And he's no meaner to people than Galsworthy. We just know the people, and we don't know those Englishmen like Soames Forsyte."

He noticed that there were more books on the table, a helter-skelter pile. "Do you read a lot?"

"Yes, and so does my mother. I'm going to Radcliffe, and since I'm an English major—do you read much?"

"Not now. I've been busy lately. But I did in school. Not many novels, though. Mostly history and economics and philosophy." He went to the table beside her and began to look at the books. *The Decline of the West*, some Shaw plays and *An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, a volume of Mencken's *Prejudices*, *Sodom and Gomorrhah*, *The Counterfeiters*, George Moore's *Heloise and Abelard*, some volumes of Edna Millay, one of Emily Dickinson, a well-worn Whitman, a volume of the Temple Shakespeare—*The Merry Wives*, a book about modern French painters, and a paper-bound *Ulysses*. He picked that up and took it back to his chair. "I thought this was suppressed."

She shrugged. "You can get them anywhere in Providence or New York. They're printed in France and assembled here, I think. Have you read it?"

"No. What's it about?"

"I haven't the least idea. I can't make head or tail of it. Seems rather foolish to suppress something nobody'd think of reading on his own, doesn't it? Or trying to read, I mean."

He glanced at snatches here and there. "It doesn't make any sense. Just words. What in——"

"Don't ask me. Mother says it's probably very important, but——" She tucked her feet under herself, curling up in the big chair. "I think he's trying to do something like in modern music and painting, sort of impressionistic, trying to transcend the form. Something like that."

He put the book back and glanced once more at the collection of titles, picking out the Spengler. The hodge-podge of literature on the table made him homesick for the messy bookishness of college, the long argumentative talks, the rasp of one growing intellect against another. "I haven't read most of these," he said, fingering the books' spines. He found nothing extraordinary in the collection of titles, for he did not know that he was living through a literary renaissance. He was interested merely because the books were new, and at home all the books, except those he'd brought from school, were old; not because he found anything amazing in the reading matter that drifted into literate households in 1928.

"Have you read this one?" he asked.

"No. That's Mother's, and you'd better not get her started on it. She thinks it's the book of the ages, and she's always snooping for

signs of the degeneration of our civilization. Father says she's crazy, that we're just beginning to hit our stride."

"I wonder if she'd lend it to me?"

"I'm sure she would. She's always looking for converts to the gloom theory—that's what my father calls it."

"One of my friends at Harvard went overboard for it, too. Doesn't Spengler say the Germans will conquer the world, something like that?"

"The *Germans!*" She hooted in derision. "Why, they'll never fight another war. They couldn't lick a dead cat any more."

He liked her enormously. It wasn't merely a matter of yearning to possess her. "I think you're right. I expect there won't be any more wars, not big ones. It's too destructive. Airplanes and poison gas, and now people are beginning to find out all about the profiteering and things like the sugar trust, it stands to reason——"

"But perhaps they'll forget some day. Or perhaps tyrants like Napoleon will come along and——"

"Not any more. People are too enlightened now. Tyrants belong to the Dark Ages. I don't suppose I'll agree with this Spengler fellow for one minute, but I just want to see——"

The front door slammed: to Rafe's regret, Philip Hawkes and his wife came into the room. After a little small talk, Miriam and her mother went upstairs to look at what Leah had bought in Providence. Rafe asked Philip for a job and got it.

Philip said, "I can use two more men with your sort of training, if you know of any. Forty dollars a week."

"I can write some of my classmates, but I suppose most of them are settled by now. Can you tell me more about the work, sir, so that when I write them——"

"Well, I need a good accountant—not just a book-keeper, you understand. And somebody who knows something about real estate. We've been taking some options on mill buildings. Mr. Rubashevski thinks we should try to divide them up, rent out space to small businesses like the needle trades, furriers, hatters, that sort of thing. The space would be a lot cheaper than in New York. We need someone to handle it. And someone in the office. Frankly, the business is swamping us. Andrew has all he can do with the legal end of it. Mr. Rubashevski is busy with his store, which makes him a silent partner for us. And I'm out all day looking at machinery, so I miss the people who come to the office."

"I know. I called there five times before I finally decided if I was

ever to see you it would be here at night. Our old superintendent, Frank MacAlpin, is a good man, sir. He knows all there is to know about mills."

"He's too old. And we don't need someone who knows about mills, but someone who knows about business—twentieth-century business. That's pretty cut-throat. Not a closed corporation run like an ante bellum garden party with the gentry on one side of the fence and everybody else outside, looking through the bars. Of course if MacAlpin really needs a job——"

"I don't know that he does. You seem to think, sir, that the mills will never open up again. Renting out the space to other trades. It sounds rather final."

"Yes. Undoubtedly some mills will reorganize and open again, but I should think not many. People like Pugh are finished. Even if he could scrape the capital together to reopen, he wouldn't last more than a year or two in New England."

"But he's supposed to be one of the smartest mill men——"

"Not smart. Slick."

"I don't understand it," said Rafe. "I never will. A whole business collapsing overnight, like a world crashing. I walk along and see the machinery being hauled through the streets——"

"Know where it's going? Japan, most of it. The rest is fit only for junking. And right there is the whole history of cotton textiles. Always moving toward the lowest wage scale and the biggest market. Since the eighteen nineties I've watched the mills moving South, sold them machinery, the newest and best, things Pugh wouldn't buy. Nobody paid attention up here until it was too late. In another fifty years they'll start leaving the South, moving to Puerto Rico, Mexico, South America. Once a country achieves a fair standard of living, which really means once the labour market dries up and help gets scarce, it can't afford to stay in the textile business. By the way, how's Mr. Olney?"

"Much better, thank you. I wonder, sir, do you think we could rent out space in the Olney mills?"

"Full of machinery, aren't they?"

"Yes, but——"

Miriam and Leah came back, and the conversation grew general. Leah made tea, Rafe borrowed the Spengler, and when he left he felt unreasonably happy. It wasn't merely finding a job for a very respectable salary. It was finding a job he knew he would enjoy, and people to talk to, and possibly—just possibly—a girl to love.

The next day he spoke to Barnabas about selling the mill machinery and renting out the space.

"There's a chattel mortgage on the machinery, Rafe. I doubt we'd get enough for it, in this glutted market, to pay off the debt. Besides——"

"Yes, sir?"

"I'd like to think about it. I can't help feeling times will be better soon. And it wouldn't do to work ourselves into a position where we'd never be able to reopen. If the city does have to refund some of the taxes——"

"You're probably right, sir." Rafe did not think so, not after talking to Philip Hawkes. But it would be bad for Barnabas to have no hope.

4

Day followed day, a dreary chain, shackles for Kitty McCarran. If anything happened, it was bad. When nothing happened, it was worse. Gramma roused herself and began to wander through the house in a lethargy of grief. O'Hearn, who was eighty-six, went down into the cellar one night to bank the fire and quietly died, leaving all the draughts open. No one knew it until morning, and only then because the house was freezing, and the fire out, and Rafe had to tend to it. O'Hearn's going was good riddance (might God forgive her for thinking it), for he was old and useless. It caused a lot of trouble, though, with Mrs. O'Hearn loud in her lamentations for his unshriven soul, and every Irishman in town traipsing through the servants' quarters for the wake. And, of course, Barnabas insisted upon paying for the funeral.

When it was all over, Mrs. O'Hearn came to Kitty and announced that she was going back to Ireland. That was good riddance, too, and it would be a blessing to have a capable maid in the house for a change, but—"Aren't you afraid to take such a trip at your age, Mrs. O'Hearn?"

"Sure I'm only eighty-three me last birthday, Mrs. Olney, same as Bridie McCarran. And once I get back to the 'Old Sod' I'll likely see a hundred or more, if I do say it. 'Tis the salubrious air over the green hills, Mrs. Olney, puts new life in old bones, and many's the time I've said to Pat, God rest his soul, 'twas a terrible danger we risked, lingering on in the heretic country where even the Irish die young. I've made up me mind, Mrs. Olney, and the devil himself can't talk

me out of it, for this is an unhealthy land. So I'm taking my mite I've saved through the years, and I'm leaving, and no regrets."

There were none on Kitty's side either, except that Barnabas insisted upon buying Mrs. O'Hearn's steamship ticket, although he must know that she had every cent she and Pat together had ever earned, a tidy sum for Ireland. Kitty got Leona to come back, and she hired an odd-job man for the lawn and the furnace. One thing was a blessing: people would work for almost nothing with the mills down.

Barnabas's leg healed slowly. He was able to move around on crutches, though he was forbidden to attempt stairs. The nurse left. The burden of the two old people fell like a stone on Kitty. Vampires, sucking away the last years of her beauty. Leeches, draining away her life. She stopped fussing over her appearance. Who cared any more? Who ever looked at her? If anyone came, it was to see Gramma or Barnabas, not her. She might as well have stayed in Ireland, for all this town knew she existed. And Lucian, rotting away there in jail—"You'd think he'd write now, wouldn't you? It just showed how much he'd ever cared. After her money, that was all, and now he'd got it, he brushed her away like a gnat. Not that she'd answer if he did write.

Trouble, that's all there was. Trouble, day in, day out. Nothing grand about it, either, like in the movies. Just drawn-out, wearing-down trouble, drip, drip, drip, sordid as a leaky faucet. Rafe, no better than a Protestant, and working for Philip Hawkes—that she should live to see the day! Rosie, coming to call on Gramma—Rosie setting foot in Kitty McCarran's house! And the airs and graces, you wouldn't believe it possible, and a new sealskin coat, wholesale probably from Mr. Rubashevski. For several days after Rosie called, Kitty resumed creaming her face and buffing her nails.

Minerva came to see Gramma and stayed to talk to Barnabas, who was amused by her caustic tongue. Minerva was sixty-five, but as she'd never been a beauty she had nothing to lose with age, which had softened her features, whitened her hair, and put a little flesh on her angular bones. She and Barnabas enjoyed each other so much that she took to dropping in at night when Rubashevski was working. They'd sit drinking tea, and Minerva would rake the whole town over with her sharp tongue, tearing the very best people, like the Pughs, to shreds. "They sold their house, you know. Hideous place. Some friends of Anton's bought it—people coming here to start a blouse factory."

"Sold his house—that's an odd thing for Ezra to do. He took pride in the place."

"The rumour is he had to sell it to pay Philpott to defend Lucian. Hasn't got a dime, poor man. Funny thing about that. Any man who really cared about his son-in-law would hardly hire Philpott to defend him, d'you think?"

"He's always been Lucian's lawyer. A great many people have confidence in him."

"Um. What this town's suffering from is an overdose of misplaced confidence. You know Pugh is planning to go to Europe when the trial's over?"

"No, I hadn't heard that."

"Uh-huh. Missionary project, I expect. Take the know-how over and spread it among the heathen."

Barnabas laughed. From her corner, where no one paid attention to her, Kitty said, "I don't think it's very tactful to mention the trial and talk about it, as if 'twas just—just *anybody*."

"Why not? No use wasting tact on something the newspapers have been making hay with for months. By the way, Mr. Olney, Anton's going in for antiques. Have you any you want to sell?"

"A house full at Westport Harbor. Rafe can take you out any time." The buyer of the cottage had been after Barnabas to move the furniture out of it, and Barnabas had no place to move it to. He knew the Rubashevskis' motive. What ramparts of pride they had built up, all of them, that now when he was old and poor through his own folly, his friends must help him under pretext of buying old furniture from him. He felt no need now to save face, but if they did, let it go without argument. How odd that they should need to hide their kindness to save face! Business, they'd call it. Buy the junk and pay too much for it and call it business! To what a state have we brought ourselves that now we can confront our love, our charity, our kindness, only by calling it business?

He smiled, thinking of the long line of life that lay behind him. All time, all *his* time, the aeons of his life. Somewhere back there in the far-away years, Miss Minerva Hawkes pushed a cart of salvage through the streets, and her worn-out overcoat flapped over her draggled skirt, and the relics of roses nodded on her battered velvet bonnet. He thought of people he had loved then, things he'd thought important. Faded, gone, as wilted and outmoded as Minerva's old bonnet. Now he loved Minerva Hawkes with an odd mystical bond, as St. Francis had loved Sister Rain and Brother Sun.



After she had gone and he lay sleepless on his bed he wondered what might have happened, what small storm roused, if he had said, "I love you, Sister Scavenger. You and your charity in the name of trade, you and your brusque tongue and your hard airs, you and your courage and the cart your courage used to push, and the incredible bonnet from somebody's trash can." Perhaps, as one faced death, one's values grew perverted. How else explain the strangeness he felt toward Lucian, and the bond he felt between himself and Minerva, as if they were twin threads on the loom? Warp threads, strong, long fibred, starched. The spine of the cloth, reaching from end to end with rigorous purpose. Minerva, Silence, Anton, the Hawkes brothers, possibly Rafe, though it was a bit soon to tell. A good warp could take a lot of soft filler like Lucian and Kitty McCarran. He fell asleep with this frankness in his mind. Either death, approaching, did not demand humility; or one needed a sense of honest worth for the coming trial.

Silence Bess came often to see him. It took many visits before she perceived that he really did not have the money to help Lucian, in whose cause she battled as valiantly as she had battled in all the other causes. Her conduct puzzled him. "Why do you care so much, Silence? If you're honest, you'll admit you never liked Lucian."

"I can't abide him. I go to Taunton and talk to him, try to make sense of what he says, and I come away despising him. But the fact remains, he's innocent. Not in thought, I suppose. If he'd been clever enough to think of stealing the money and pinning it on someone else, I can't believe he wouldn't have done it. That's neither here nor there. He didn't do it. So far we don't condemn men for their thoughts."

"Don't we? I wonder sometimes—is there another justice, a retribution lying somewhere in the web, waiting till we stumble blindly on it? 'And that which I feared came upon me.' What do we fear, except the thing for which we've never paid?"

"Don't go abstract on me, Barnabas. Reason like that, and any of us can find an excuse to kill anybody. If he doesn't hurt us, we can be sure he hurts someone. It's awfully easy for a righteous man to work up indignation and scourge humanity in the name of God. Whatever Lucian may be or may have done, he didn't do this. Ezra Pugh did it——"

"Silence! You have no proof of that! Please don't——"

"All right, I haven't. I've common sense though. This is a Pugh trick, Barnabas. I can see the rat tracks just as plain as if I were in the

sewer he calls his mind. He made Lucian bond those mills and give him the cash. He sold them——”

He remembered that Ezra had manœuvred old Salvation Bess into bankruptcy, robbing Silence of a fortune. As she talked, vehemently building up Lucian's case, he thought of the devious ways of the mind, even of minds so apparently disinterested as Silence's. What she wanted, perhaps, was not vindication of Lucian but vengeance on Pugh. He sighed, caught in a trap where he was forced to judge. He liked Silence, one of the warp threads of integrity. But he really believed, to his sorrow, that Lucian was guilty.

“It's a matter of principle, Barnabas. No decent person can stand by without lifting a finger and see an innocent man convicted of a crime he didn't commit.”

“If he's innocent, perhaps he won't be convicted.”

“Don't be naïve, Barnabas. Pugh has piled up so much evidence against him. And that pudding-head lawyer Philpott—why, he couldn't get an archangel out of hell! He has sawdust where his brains ought to be.”

“Are you going to testify for Lucian?”

“How can I? I've no evidence. The cheques and contracts and bonds are evidence. The bankers are witnesses, and the people who bought the machinery. I don't know a thing—except the truth, of course. But that's got nothing to do with the law.”

“Perhaps as a character witness——”

“Are you crazy, Barnabas? Lucian hasn't a shred of character. I'll do everything in my power to get him off because he's innocent. But I can't go on the stand and perjure myself to say he's an honest man. Why, he never had an honest thought in his life!”

Barnabas chuckled. “You're a quaint girl, Silence, God bless you for it. When you see Lucian, ask him to write me. Perhaps he can suggest some way that I can help him.”

But Lucian had no time. His trial came up in a week, and he was busy working on his case with Philpott. He saw no point in wasting time writing to his father simply because that old nuisance Silence Bess asked him to.

Barnabas insisted upon reading everything the papers printed about the case, although everyone thought it would worry him. It did worry him, for it was plain from the first day that Lucian had little chance. The State declared its intention to prove that he had always been dishonest and had a bad record of bankruptcy behind him. Barnabas tried to think back to the circumstances of the bankruptcy, but he

knew so little about it he could not remember even the date Lucian's mill had closed. He called Kitty to ask her what she remembered, and she reeled off dates and circumstances so glibly that he felt suspicious.

"Have you been looking it up?"

"Well now—'twas just the other day they showed me the papers, and all the dates on a list, so——"

"They? Who?"

"How should I know? It's the law, and the court men brought me a paper, saying I must go to Taunton, and tomorrow's the day. I didn't say anything about it for fear of worrying you."

"Bother worrying me! You're going to testify against Lucian?"

"It's not against him to tell the truth. And the law says I have to, so I have to."

"Has anyone told you what to say?"

"And why should they tell me? All I've to say is he rented the land for the mill and he didn't pay the rent."

"But you can't! Didn't Lucian ever mean anything to you?"

"That's neither here nor there. It's the truth he didn't pay."

"But you always got the rent in the end, didn't you?"

"No thanks to him. You may as well understand, Mr. Olney, there's nobody on this earth I hate like I do Lucian, that never did me anything but harm from the minute he set eyes on me."

He did not understand. Of course she had to testify if she was summoned; but why with such bitterness? Ever since Barnabas had walked in on Kitty and Lucian in his study he had supposed that their love affair had been uninterrupted. He thought that Lucian had somehow managed to justify himself to Kitty after his return from Europe, when Rafe was still a baby; that all these years they had been lovers, even when Kitty had married Barnabas. He supposed that Lucian had bought her jewels, cars, and furs, even after her marriage, for he had little conception of how much Kitty had accumulated by her wise property investments and her gouging of himself. Finally, he supposed that Kitty had given Lucian her savings to invest and he had lost them or stolen them. All this was not compatible with hatred. But he would never understand Kitty, nor Lucian. Odd that the person to whom he felt closest was Rafe, their child.

Kitty dressed carefully for the trial. She wore her black suit that had cost a fortune because the Frenchman Patou had made it. Lucian had always admired her in it. A black cloche hat with a wisp of veil which hid the wrinkles about her eyes, and her silver fox furs. There'd be no woman at the trial who could touch her for looks, she made sure of that. Lucian's last sight of her would prove, once and for all, that she wasn't crying her eyes out over him.

If Kitty had expected to see Lucian cowed, she was disappointed. He sat at the table with his counsel as debonair as ever, though somewhat flabbier. He'd had no exercise in jail and the starchy food had caused him to gain weight. He was immaculately turned out in the blue serge and white linen of the elite. He looked every inch a mill manager, and he behaved as if he owned the courtroom and was the impresario of these proceedings.

Kitty took the stand with the appearance of modesty, for she was frightened. Now that she saw the courtroom and felt its awesome gravity, and the black-robed judge glowered down at her, and the lawyers estimated her with calculating eyes, she had misgivings. Perhaps this was not the place to gloat over Lucian. Perhaps, unwittingly, she had walked into a stronghold of her old-time Yankee enemies. She mumbled the oath after the bailiff, her heart pounding in fright.

The prosecutor showed respect for her. He called her Mrs. Olney every time he addressed her, and he asked only the questions in which he'd drilled her. She gave the answers she'd memorized: all the glib dates concerning Lucian's bankruptcy, how Lucian and Mr. Philpott had tried to cheat her of her rent, how Lucian had given her a tenement in lieu of cash when, during the Long Strike, she'd threatened to go to law for her rights. Her answers were quietly spoken, to the point, and very damaging to Lucian. She had to avoid looking at him while she was on the stand, for he sat staring at her with a smug smile on his face, a smirk: as if *he* knew, although perhaps no one else did, that she wasn't the grand lady she pretended to be.

She had not expected any but friends to question her. When the prosecution finished she started to leave the stand. The judge humiliated her by saying, "One moment please, Mrs. Olney." A titter ran through the courtroom. Lucian's smirk broadened into a grin. An unbecoming dark blush stained Kitty's face.

A lean individual who was sitting next to Lucian held a whispered consultation with Mr. Philpott while Kitty waited. He was a Boston lawyer imported to handle what Philpott contemptuously called "the courtroom end of the case". He rose with a lazy, unwinding sort of motion. Everyone could see that he had the situation well under control: the courtroom was his oyster. He was over six feet tall, narrow as a string bean, loosely jointed. His self-possession as he lounged toward Kitty filled her with terror. He had all the ease and power of the mighty, her enemies, worn negligently, as a king lets his ermine trail behind him in the dust. Kitty longed for a place to hide.

"When did you buy the Olney Freetown farm, Mrs.—er—Olney?" He put the barest trace of emphasis upon her name, faintly satirizing it.

"'Twas in 1902 I moved there, about August–September."

"Answer the question, please. When did you *buy* the farm?"

"I object," said the State's attorney.

"If your Honour please, I'm merely trying to establish that Mrs. Olney did own the farm and was entitled to the rents therefrom."

"Objection over-ruled," said the judge.

Kitty, not understanding this interpolation, said nothing.

"Answer, please, Mrs. Olney. Did you buy the farm in 1902?"

"No, sir. I——" She twisted her hands in awkward desperation.

"You were *not* in possession of the farm in 1902, Mrs. Olney?"

"Och, but I was, sir!" His attitude brought out servility in her, and she hated this.

"A farm is a valuable property, Mrs. Olney. Are we to understand you came into possession of it without purchasing it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Surely you don't want us to think you *stole* a farm, Mrs. Olney?"

"I object!" said the State's attorney.

"Objection sustained," said the Judge.

But the laughter that ran through the courtroom did not subside until the judge pounded for order.

"In 1902 you moved on to a farm which you had not purchased." Counsel poked an aggressive finger at her. "Who gave you that property?"

"Mr. Barnabas Olney," she said with angry defiance, "and I've the deed here to prove it." She produced the paper from her purse.

"I don't question your word, Mrs. Olney." He ignored the paper. "When did you marry Barnabas Olney?"

The sudden shift startled her, but the pounding of her heart subsided a little for she felt on safe ground now. Her marriage was nothing to be ashamed of. "Eight years ago."

"That would be in 1920? In 1902 when you acquired the farm you were a spinster?"

"Yes, sir." The State's attorney again objected, but Kitty had already answered.

"You were well acquainted with Barnabas Olney in 1902, however? So well acquainted that he gave you a valuable property?"

"I object. The question is irrelevant," said the State's attorney.

"Objection sustained. Counsel will confine himself to the examination." But the judge stared benignly over his glasses at Kitty's tormentor. There was a hint of amusement in his eyes.

"You came to Fall River in December 1901, Mrs. Olney?"

"Yes, sir."

"And eight or nine months later, in the summer of 1902, Barnabas Olney gave you a valuable property?"

"Yes, sir."

"This was the land you subsequently rented to Lucian Olney for a mill site?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me put a hypothetical question to you, Miss McCarran." The use of her maiden name was so smooth that it seemed accidental, a slip of the tongue. Kitty was so troubled that she did not notice it, although several people in the courtroom tittered. "Would you say that if you had not intervened, breaking the line of succession of this old property in the Olney family, Lucian Olney would have owned the farm in 1904 and would therefore not be required to pay rent on it?"

"I can't say, sir. I owned it."

Counsel paced the floor between the witness stand and the jury box apparently in deep thought. He looked at the jury, as if to draw strength from the contemplation of twelve such virtuous, incorruptible and intelligent faces. Then in a low, chummy voice he asked, "Is it, or is it not true, Miss McCarran, that in February 1903, being then situated on the Olney farm, given to you freely by Barnabas Olney five months previously, you there gave birth to an illegitimate child?"

"I object!" shouted the State's attorney.

"Objection sustained," murmured the judge. His voice was drowned by the titters, the buzzing, the shocked whispers in the courtroom. Lucian was openly chuckling as he looked at Kitty.

A woman in the front row said loudly, "Who'd take her word for anything? Barnabas Olney's fancy woman! Dirt, that's what she——"

The judge pounded. "Order! Order!" And, as the hum subsided, "At the next disturbance, the bailiff will clear the courtroom." With cold Yankee fury he pointed at the woman who had talked too loudly, "Madam, your gratuitous opinions have no place in this court. You will leave." As she flounced out, giving Kitty a full view of her righteous back, the judge cautioned the jury against susceptibility to lay opinions, and, as if worried that the case might be carried to a higher court because of undue influence upon the jury, he had the whole cross-examination of Kitty McCarran Olney stricken from the record.

The harm was done, however. Lucian smirked. Mr. Philpott beamed in ample satisfaction, thinking that this Boston fellow was worth every cent he cost, which was the highest praise Mr. Philpott could confer upon another man.

Counsel studied the jury thoughtfully, acknowledging in pantomime that they were not on any account to be fooled. Then he put Kitty through the whole thing again, rewording his questions to make them subtly more cruel. In mounting anger she answered, staring down at Lucian's smirking face, hating him, hating the love he'd wrenched from her and all the betrayals; hating him for forcing a painful individuality upon her; hating even the money on which finally she had set all her hope; and above all hating him for taking even that, the sterile gold, away from her.

As the humiliating questions followed each other, tearing from Kitty the shreds of self-respect she had built up through the years, exposing the pathetic desperation of her life to her enemies, there rose in her a pure passion for vindication. As the questions were repeated she saw with painful clarity what they were trying to do to her. Drag her name in the mud, use her once more to serve Lucian. From the moment she'd come to this hard country they'd pushed her down deeper and deeper into shame and uselessness. They'd killed her father, rest his soul; mocked her faith—heretics that they were; ignored her beauty. Only because she'd fought back every step of the way had they failed to wear her down and convert her into a human rag like Bridie McCarran.

She answered counsel's mocking questions which tore the secrets of her life to ribbons, and she thought, How much degradation can a human woman stand? Counsel changed both the wording and the

tone of his last question. He shot at her in a thundering voice, "Did you or did you not give birth to an illegitimate child in 1903?"

"I object!" shouted the State's attorney.

A red stain of anger discoloured Kitty's face. Her lips curled back from her teeth in a primitive snarl, its ugliness and pathos emphasized by the civilized black suit and the smart black hat with its wisp of veil. Not hearing that the judge sustained the objection, she stood up, clutching the railing with her left hand. She leaned toward Lucian, pointing at him.

"He's the father of my child, him and no other! May he rot in Hell and his vile flesh crawl in the eternal burning!" Her anachronistic curse, wild lyrical litany, rang through the silence of the court-room. "'Twas he that took me, in the youngness of my beauty, and the world before me, and hope in my heart. And he took it all in his cursed lying hands and made my life a desert and a waste. And now you'd tell me I rob him of his rights, when 'twas him that tried to steal the rents from me, the last thing I'd got left to steal? Well, I'm not so young and green now, and he stands where he's a right to stand, thief and liar that he is, despoiler of souls like the devil that marked him in his cradle. So you'd twist my words, would you, and make a mockery of my name, would you? And let him and his black heart go free because he's one of you! 'Twas my farm, for all you twist and say it wasn't! Mine and——"

The judge pleaded, "Mrs. Olney, this is a court of law!"

Her wrath careened on, spilling out of her ecstatically, gilded with the Irish love of language, beating with angry rhythms like an ancient ballad against the austere ears of the Yankee court. "And woe there is and always was to the young and tender that cross his path, so he blackens their lives into twisted stumps and kills the green in the shoots, he does, him with his lies and his wheedling voice that stole my love and my virtue when I was young, and in the end comes back to steal my money, him with his shares that're so much paper!"

"Mrs. Olney," begged the judge, looking at Lucian's counsel who was stalking the floor before the bench like a lion in a turmoil. "This is a court of law! Curb yourself! Remember in justice there's no place for——"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" she screamed. "Let me talk, can't you, now that my heart's free and there's a black burning in it like the fires of hell! He did it, I tell you, he did it all, from the time he took me to Boston promising to marry me till this day when he's left me a pauper. The farm was mine! And the rents were mine, given me by his own



father to wash out the shame! It's on the streets I'd be this minute were it not for him, the kind old man that hates the sight of me, but he gave me food and a roof over me and married me fair and honest to wipe out the shame, but no thanks to Lucian!" She turned on the judge with a sweeping gesture of primitive grandeur. "Nor thanks to you! Nor you! Nor any of you that lure us here from the green fields and the clean air, and put us in the mills till our feet are raw from the cruel stairs, and from the morn's light to the dark's dark our hearts grow black with the grief of it! Oh, Mother of God, is this hell I've lived in, and not the world of men?" It was a wild cry, dying like an echoing bell in the courtroom, where no one understood the meaning of it because all of them—judge, jury, lawyers, the prisoner, and the audience—were convinced they lived in the field next to Paradise. For them the only greener pasture was heaven itself, the only fairer justice was God's; and even in heaven, although there might be an easier way to live, there would be no way more righteous nor more productive than their own.

This banshee wail of foreign grief was therefore a shocking, unseemly assault upon decent ears. They could make nothing of it except this: if she'd come to the land of contentment and opportunity and still had wasted her life, she had no one to blame but herself.

In the silence, filled with the echoes of Kitty's woeful cry, the prisoner laughed, a low throaty chuckle. Kitty heard it, and it put her in her place, her and her misguided grief, and her raw humanity, and her wild, low ways. She sank back into the witness chair, sobbing, covering her face with her hands. She moaned, "Holy Mary, forgive me! What have I done? What have I said?"

The bailiff helped her from the chair and led her from the room. She found her way out of the building and to her car, where she sat for a long while bowed over the wheel before she felt able to drive herself home.

## 6

When she opened the door Rafe was standing in the hall, his hand still on the telephone receiver which he had just replaced. It was almost six o'clock and the hall was dark, shadowy with the oppressive gloom that gathers in old halls still unlit when the twilight comes. Rafe's face was like a white mask standing forth from the grey limbo. His eyes seemed sunk into his skull. The moulding of his bones showed like sculptured relief, the young Emperor carved upon the coin. He might

have been the ghost of a dead Olney who'd stepped down from an old picture to haunt the house. He stared at his mother as if he'd never seen her before.

"Rafe! What happened? Are you sick?"

"He's dead. I found him——" Rafe's voice broke. He swallowed the way children do when they are close to tears and will not cry. "I came home from work and found him. In there. All crumpled up, as if a big hand had come out of nowhere and squeezed him out of shape and twisted him." His voice sounded hollow, dull. One could not be sure he knew what he was saying.

Kitty felt one wild upsurge of relief like a wave of light washing through her. But instantly it was gone, and a heavy sensation of guilt took its place.

"But the morphine—it was right there beside him, Rafe. I filled the needle, like always when I have to go out. Didn't he——"

"I don't know. I think he tried. The needle's on the floor, all broken."

"But Gramma—Leona——" She leaned against the newel post of the stairs. She felt very tired now. "He must have cried out, now. If he called——" Her great eyes stared into his drawn face, begging him to exonerate her of all guilt.

"I don't know. I wasn't here. And you—you were gone, too. Nobody to—you see, he was all alone." He turned to go back into Barnabas's study, which at the time of his last attack had been converted into his bedroom. "I'm going to stay with him now, until the doctor comes. I called the doctor."

"What use is that, when he's dead?"

"I don't know. I believe you have to. But when he comes he'll tell me what to do. I don't know how—how to manage this. There's nothing I can think of, except to stay with him."

He moved away from her to keep his vigil, dismissing her as if he knew her but slightly. She did not notice that in his grief he failed to turn to her for comfort. In truth, they were strangers. Through all the years they'd walked away from each other, down separate paths.

Kitty did not want to look at Barnabas. She felt afraid of him, dead. She did not want even to think of him. "I'll keep myself busy," she told herself, as if there were salvation in petty activity, assuagement of the awful guilt that gnawed her because, as once before in her life, she had worked magic, and what she wished had come true.

She went upstairs to Gramma's room, where she found old Bridie sitting at the window staring into the twilight, her worn hands folded

in her lap as she patiently waited for her dinner. "You all right, Gramma?"

Gramma smiled vaguely. "Sure it's a pleasure to see the days are getting longer now, ain't it, dearie? There's a hardship in the winter for old bones."

"Shall I have Leona send your dinner up on a tray? Would you like that?"

"Sure, if it suits you, dearie. I could do with a nice hot cup of tea."

Kitty closed the door when she went out, lest Gramma hear strange noises downstairs, grow suspicious, perhaps investigate and be set off again into one of her spells at the sight of grief in the house. While Kitty was changing her clothes in her own room the doctor came and went again. Rafe did not call her. She resented this. He was pushing her aside in her own house.

She went down and knocked upon the study door. "Don't you want your supper, Rafe?"

"No, thank you," he said with dull politeness. "I'm not hungry."

She got a tray of light food from the kitchen and carried it up to Gramma's room. She ate with the old woman, although she was not very hungry herself. It was mostly that she didn't want to be alone, facing her guilt in solitude. And remembering the trial and all the torments of the day.

At eight o'clock the undertaker's men came to take Barnabas away. Rafe must have stayed in the study, though, for she did not hear him come upstairs. The whole house was still, except for old boards creaking in the night. It was unimaginable, the loneliness she felt. She lay on her bed, staring up at the black ceiling, watching the dim night forms of the furniture in her room. Her breath and the beating of her heart sounded loud to her in the silence. At last, to find some comfort in the void, she prayed for the peace of Barnabas Olney's soul.

Rafe, down in the empty study, watched the night fade and the dawn come. Sometimes he paced the floor. Once he stopped beside the chess table, where the pieces were tumbled in disorder as he and Barnabas had left them the night before. He straightened them, setting them up for the game that would never be played. It was the longest night of his life: the hours of new privation, the unmellowed sorrow, raw and biting to the bone; the time between dark and daylight, when he fought with grief and grew into maturity, alone.

Two days later Barnabas was buried, and the paper that carried the notice of his funeral on its back page also published, on its front page, the news of Lucian's conviction to ten years in the penitentiary for

grand larceny and fraud. Rafe did not bother to read about it. He had not looked at a paper since Barnabas died, and people had not yet told him that Lucian Olney was anything to him.

Even Kitty got little satisfaction from her final vengeance upon Lucian, for after the funeral Barnabas's lawyer had read his will to her, and it was a terrible thing, a mere sentence, throwing her into the gutter. "I, Barnabas Olney, being of sound mind, do hereby leave all of which I die possessed to my adopted son, Rafael McCarran Olney, for I have previously provided for my wife Kitty."

"What does he mean by that?" she demanded of Rafe when they got home. "Not a cent in this world did he provide for me."

"He meant the trust fund and the Freetown farm," said Rafe wearily. "Do we have to talk about it, Mother? What difference does it make?"

"It makes the difference between holding my head up and living in shame the rest of my life. The fund's naught but paper, mill stocks not worth the burning, and he knew it. And sure you don't think after living on Rock Street I'll go back to that miserable farm, now?"

"I don't know. At least it's a roof. We'll have to move out of here."

"Are you out of your mind, Rafe? Why should we move when you're a millionaire at last, owning the mill and all?"

"I don't own the mill. The bank owns it. It's mortgaged. So is this house. There's a little more than seven hundred dollars in the bank. When the funeral bills are paid most of that will be gone. I have twenty-two dollars in my pocket, and unless you have some more, that's all there is, Mother. We can't live here on my forty dollars a week."

She stared at him, not believing what he said. "You're lying to me, Rafe! He was a rich man, rich! You're trying to throw me into the street, your own mother, so you can have it all for that Jew girl you want to marry. Oh, don't think I don't know about it!" Her voice rose in a strident scream. "Why did you think I married him, except he was rich? He that hated the sight of me? He that——"

"I can't talk about it, Mother. There isn't any money. You'll have to face it and get used to it. After all, does it matter so much?"

"Matter! 'Tis the only thing on earth that matters, when all's said and done, and you're old and alone, and——"

But he had left the room. She heard the door slam as he left the house, gone to Miriam Hawkes for such comfort as he could wring from his new love for the loss of the old.

She finally understood, past all doubt, that there was no money. She spent frantic days scrabbling to find some. No one would buy the mill for more than the mortgage on it, nor the Rock Street house. They'd have to go, and not a dime out of them. She found that she could not sell the farm, for she still did not hold it in freehold, and on her death it reverted to Rafe. She could not even move back there, for the lease of the farmer to whom she had rented it still had two years to run. She got fifteen dollars a month rent from it, and that was all she had to live on and feed Gramma, although Rafe insisted he would take care of Gramma, and of her, too. She could see herself living in the same house with that uppity Miriam Hawkes, eating the crumbs from her table. What a life that would be for Kitty McCarran that had owned her own carriages and her own automobiles, and worn silks and furs, and had all that property, ending her days beholden to Philip Hawkes's daughter!

Time closed in on her, a wall of frustration bounding emptiness. She screamed at Rafe, and all she could get out of him in answer was, "Please, Mother, there's nothing I can do about it. We'll just have to rent a tenement if we can't go back to the farm. Look, why don't you start going through this furniture, pick out what we'd like to keep, and talk to Aunt Minerva about selling the rest?"

Not likely she'd do that, she thought. Crawl to Minerva so they could all gloat over her! And she didn't want any of this old junk; she'd hated it from the day she'd first set eyes on it. Instead of doing what Rafe asked, she would go into her room and lock the door, take out her beads, kneel beside the bed and pray. As she knelt there her mind went back over her life. She saw as in a vision the girl, herself, standing on the deck of the old *Priscilla*, her face uplifted to the fog, the dreams and the fears growing big in her heart. "Oh," she whispered to herself, "but I was a pretty thing, may the Lord forgive my vanity!" And she cried, remembering the mill and her bare hurt feet that did their part to wear the stairs down. And Philip Hawkes with his fierce wild love, and the tenement kitchen, and Minerva's new hat, and Gramma kneeling back from blacking the stove and saying, "A nun! A sinful old body like me? Are you out of your mind, dearie?"

That was a way out. The convent. She brooded over this final solution with no thought that the nuns too might reject her. Dead to

the world, the living death. Kitty McCarran as the bride of Christ. Ah, they'd be sorry enough for what they'd done to her when she took the veil! She imagined how they'd all come to that irrevocable ceremony: Rafe and his girl, Minerva, Philip, Andrew, even Mr. Rubashevski and Gramma, if she was still alive then. They'd weep, realizing at last how they had driven and goaded her. But she, in her immaculate veil, would smile at them and forgive them, and even the most depraved among them would be constrained to feel some awe.

She began to leave off her make-up, to comb her hair severely, and to wear black dresses around the house. No one commented upon the change. She took to wearing her rosary tied conspicuously to her belt; but no one noticed that either. She smiled to herself, watching their insensitivity. If they thought she wouldn't do it, they were wrong. All the other dreams of her youth had come true, twisted out of shape by reality, but still—they had come true. So why not this one?

Methodically she started to sort out her possessions, all the worldly goods she must dispose of. The ermine cape she'd hardly worn, the evening dresses she'd bought to be buying something, her sealskin coat, the watch Lucian had given her. But perhaps nuns could have watches: they'd have to tell the time somehow. She was in the midst of this sad chore, her things spread out all over her room, when Rafe came home early one day. Her door was open, but he hesitated on the threshold. "May I come in, Mother?"

"You're home early. Philip fire you?"

"I had to go to the bank. There were some things in a safe-deposit box there. I didn't know about it till they wrote me." He set a package wrapped in brown paper down on the bed. "I suppose they belong to you?"

"We can tell in a whish, though I can't think what——" She clipped the string with her nail scissors and pushed the paper away, revealing three old-fashioned jewel boxes. Rafe was looking at her, and she flushed under his gaze. She turned her back to him as she opened the first box. Amy Olney's jewels flashed upon her a cold, many-coloured smile.

Rafe heard the quick intake of her breath. "They *are* yours, aren't they?"

"Of course they're mine! Who's else would they be?"

"I don't—I wasn't sure. I thought perhaps his first wife——"

Her eyes narrowed as she watched him. She felt that they were enemies now. This was a prize worth fighting over. "And if they

were you want them for your Jew girl, eh? Well, he gave them to me when we were married, so you can put that out of your mind."

"Well, just so you're happy," he said. He made his wish for felicity sound like an insult. Jealous, no doubt. People who had nothing were always jealous of the one who had something—anything. But right now she wished he'd get out and leave her alone with the jewels.

"What are you going to do with them, Mother? Sell them?"

"Wouldn't you like to know, though? Are you staying here or going back to work?"

"Back to work. And I won't be home to dinner. I'm eating with the Hawkes."

When he'd gone she closed the door. She took each ring and brooch and necklace from the boxes and spread them all out on the bed. Then she knelt before them and gloated over them as plans raced through her mind. She could pay off the mortgage on the house—but that would be silly, for she hated the house. She could buy up property for a song—but no one was paying his rent, so what good was that? She could buy and sell mill property like the Hawkes brothers, but that was no better than being a junk dealer, no business for a lady. She took a diamond ring to the window and twisted it in the sunlight, watching the coloured flashes dance. Then she rubbed the stone caressingly against her cheek.

"I know," she thought, "I'll go to Ireland. I'll be a grand lady in Ireland." No disgrace there, and nobody to look down on her, and no Yankees to fight on their own hard ground that she'd never understood and never would understand. She'd get a good husband there, a real gentleman of the true faith. She laughed, turning suddenly to look again at the display on the bed, as if she wanted to catch the winking jewels unaware. Then she swooped down upon them, swept them up with her arms into a pile, lifted them in her hands and let them fall, feeling the hard worth of the gold and stones in her fingers. A sort of awe came over her as she worshipped them.

Sure God will be good to me now, thought Kitty McCarran.



















